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ESSAYS

*LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL*







# ESSAYS

*LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL*

**WORKS ON PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION**

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR.*

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# ESSAYS

*LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL*

BY

JAMES LINDSAY, B.D., B.Sc.

✓  
F.R.S.E., F.G.S.

CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES,  
LETTERS, AND ARTS OF PADUA;  
AND MINISTER OF ST ANDREW'S PARISH CHURCH,  
KILMARNOCK

*"Il n'y a que la littérature qui cultive."*

—ALEXANDRE VINET.

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TO THE  
*MEMORY OF MY DEAR FATHER,*  
WHO TOOK THE LIVELIEST INTEREST IN THE  
PREPARATION OF THESE ESSAYS,  
AND WHO WAS SUDDENLY WITHDRAWN,  
ON THE EVE OF THEIR PUBLICATION,  
INTO THE PARADISE OF GOD,  
*THIS VOLUME*  
IS DEDICATED,  
WITH EVERY SENTIMENT OF  
GRATEFUL FILIAL REMEMBRANCE.



## P R E F A C E.

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IT is right to say that the publication of these Essays is connected with circumstance rather than choice. The history of their publication is, in a word, this, that their success when delivered as Lectures—with, however, many passages now omitted from them as Essays—was so unexpectedly great as to issue in a demand for their publication such as it was at length impossible to resist.

I believe—not without an acquaintance with the voluminous literature which has gathered around each and all of their subjects—that the treatment in the present volume will be found sufficiently

distinctive. I have sought to present aspects of looking at these great themes which have for me deep interest and prime importance, and which I have not found set forth—when touched upon at all—with the strength, lucidity, and grasp that such aspects seem to me to deserve. I have tried to import a collective unity into their treatment, although the subjects are so varied,—the first, second, and third being respectively connected with epic, dramatic, and lyric poetry, while the fourth is representative of the New World.

My best thanks are now offered to Messrs Macmillan & Co., of London, for their kind permission to make the extracts in the essay on “The Philosophy of Tennyson.”

An Index has been added to help the usefulness of the work.

JAMES LINDSAY.

KILMARNOCK, *January* 1896.

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## THE MIND OF DANTE

" Mi mise dentro alle segrete cose."

—*Inferno*, iii. 21.

" O voi, che avete gl' intelletti sani,  
Mirate la dottrina che s' asconde  
Sotto il velame degli versi strani."

—*Inferno*, ix. 61-63.

" Ove l' umano spirito si purga."

—*Purgatorio*, i. 5.

" Io te sopra te coronò e mitrio."

—*Purgatorio*, xxvii. 142.

" Puro e disposto a salire alle stelle."

—*Purgatorio*, xxxiii. 145.

" Presso di lei, e nel mondo felice !"

—*Paradiso*, xxv. 139.

" Quant' è la larghezza  
Di questa rosa nell' estreme foglie ?"

—*Paradiso*, xxx. 116, 117.

" L' amor che muove il Sole e l' altre stelle."

—*Paradiso*, xxxiii. 145.

## THE MIND OF DANTE.

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PROFESSOR EDWARD CAIRD—now Master of Balliol—has, in his thoughtful ‘Essays,’ dealt with Dante “in his relation to the theology and ethics of the middle ages”: my purpose is a very different one; it is that of setting forth what I find of most interest in the mind of Dante for the religious and philosophical thought of to-day. I do so because I hold that not of the ‘Divina Commedia’ at least could it be said—as has been said of another of Dante’s works—that this great literary product of the middle ages is an “epitaph” rather than a “prophecy.” Yea, it is more than a prophecy; it is the fulfilment of man’s deepest fears, hopes, and aspirations. By “the mind of Dante” I do not

contemplate a psychological study, deeply interesting as his psychology must always for the student of the "Purgatorio" be. That religious mind which was in him, as Christian poet and philosopher, is what I would consider, even should it be not now possible to exhibit in full the vast comprehensiveness of his "all-surveying, all-embracing" mind. I think it must be allowed that there is a rounded completeness in Dante's great world-poem—despite all its breaks in natural sequence—which cannot be said to mark 'Faust.' If to 'Faust' we should allow greater variety and wealth of idea, we should still have to claim for Dante both loftier creative genius in the working out of his conception, and a more thorough and satisfactory solution of the great enigma he had set himself to explain, than can be assigned to Goethe. The real dynamic and underlying purport of his "mystic unfathomable song" I would bring out, not without reference to the way in which "that glorious lady," Beatrice—"new miracle is she of gentleness"—takes a place like that occupied by the "Eternal Womanly" that draws us on in 'Faust.' Nay, it is just the form of Beat-

rice, from the day when she won his youthful love, until we see her, idealised, transfigured, glorified, which proves the unifying principle of all the poet's theology and philosophy and poetry and phantasy.

But first I pause to say that it must ever remain enough to still one's heart into a deep awe to think of the amazing work to which this intensest of souls, Dante, set himself in the circumstances attendant on his long, sad exile—*exul immeritus*, far from Florence, fair as its people were fickle and factious—a work pursued with the unremitting toil of his colossal intellect, and with travail of his mighty heart. None but he who “walks as her familiar with Philosophy” is ever able so to transcend the baseness of circumstance,—

“the cruelty that bars me out

From the fair sheepfold, where a lamb I slumbered.”

—Professor Tomlinson, *Parad.*, xxv.

That religious mind which was in Dante, and from which his amazingly broad and deep theology—or, if any prefer it, religious philosophy—may be gathered, was something inseparable from the patriotism which, through all the weary



strife of Guelph and Ghibelline, was a ruling passion of him whom Lowell styles "scarred veteran of a lifelong war." I take his philosophical standpoint to have been metaphysical rather than ethical, although the ethical had its place, and a large place too, with Dante. His age was one in which the Diviner aspects of man's life might be said to loom always into larger view. A spiritual atmosphere—"an ampler ether, a diviner air"—was being created, in which such vision of the eternal world as his should be rendered possible. And if he saw "the far-off, Divine event" towards which all things are hastening, if he perceived the unity and continuity of this world and the next, what need to blame him that he saw the interests of the present life too much under the idealised forms of another world? Rather, let him be to us a corrective to the tendency of our time to be all too little moved by the grand inspiring powers of the world to come.

Our poet starts out from the very real original sin of our life of self-hood—our undivinisised self-life, to which the célestial impulse is wanting. So long as we elect here to remain, making the

satisfaction of our untrained, undisciplined, and irrational nature our "chief end," we "leave all hope behind." No easy matter did Dante feel the portraiture of sin's hideous mien: says the "Inferno,"—

"no light enterprise it is, I deem,  
To represent the lowest depth of all."

A light matter sin may be to the poet of 'Faust'—who is in this respect at least no improver upon Shakespeare—but a thing of vital moment it ever is to Dante. That is why he startles us, with his realistic power, into such a sense of its enormity, and grows not weary of holding up to our astonished gaze the reality of the Divine Government, and the sublime potentialities of the Christian religion. Nor did our poet find it easy to make clear how symbolical of man's life, with its earthly entanglements, is the darksome forest of which, having reached the "middle way of life," he speaks,—

"Ah me! how hard it were to make it clear,  
What was this strong, rough forest tangled o'er."  
—Professor Tomlinson.

Very fitly may this wood represent the un-

reclaimed territory or waste of our untamed, uncultivated, and intractable nature—"savage, and rough, and strong." The three symbols of sinful passions.—leopard, lion, wolf—are soon passed, and under guidance of Virgil—symbol of Human Science—we are at the gates of Hell, through the weird and gloomy circles of whose vast inverted cone the awfulness of sin can alone be learned. It will not be long till traces of the grotesqueness of the fancy of that time arrest our attention, but in the counterbalancing beauties that lie embedded in the form of his simple but symmetrical and powerful *terza rima* these will be speedily forgotten. For Dante must, I think, be admitted as a choice instance of the universality that comes of form approaching to essence—in fact, that springs from the vitality and intensity of the poet's thought. Hell itself, before which men stumble to-day, was to our poet reared by primeval Love no less than by primal Power and Wisdom. Yes, of course, for to him the order of eternal, imperishable Love, which men forsake, would be thus guarded and maintained. Man's deed returns upon himself, for he is free and therefore respon-

sible. Here he is obdurate, as we find him in the "Inferno." The materialisms of the weird wonders of Dante's Hell, howsoever greatly they may offend our fastidious tastes, are perfectly susceptible of a subjective and spiritual interpretation, in which they shall subserve the poet's own idea in his wondrous theme. That theme—according to himself—was Man as capable of base or noble issue "in the exercise of his free will." Now, the problems of Dante are with us still. No lack has modern philosophy known of efforts to overthrow this freedom of man's will; and, for myself, one of the things which invest "the mind of Dante" with perennial interest is just the way in which he stands forth as the poet of freewill—not without a sense of how divergent are the circumstances and constitutions of men as touching the great and sacred fact of freedom. I may be allowed to quote what I have said as to this in my forthcoming work on the 'Recent Advances in Theistic Philosophy of Religion,'—"We may as well say that we, for our part, are just as far as may be from admitting the Libertarian side to be other than stronger in recent philosophical thought,

however confidently some may speak otherwise. The rejoicing of those who, from the scientific side, regard Determinism as one of the conquests (*Errungenschaft* has been used in Germany) of our later science, is an innocuous and premature proceeding with which real Science does not trouble itself. That cause has had no reason to droop which has enlisted the support of Lotze, Kuno Fischer, Eduard Zeller, Renouvier, Dr James Martineau, Professor William James, the Right Hon. A. J. Balfour, Professor Upton, Professors Andrew and James Seth, Professor Schiller, and many more hardly less worthy names. As Professor James Seth, of America, has properly said, theistic philosophy has held to freedom as 'the supreme category' of the moral self, even against improved modern renderings of Determinism, and has maintained the proper place of contingency in our notion of freedom, differentiating such contingency from mere caprice, or even indefiniteness. There need not, we venture to think, be anything very utopian or fantastic in so doing." Later in the same chapter I have said,—“The reality of freedom, in fact, has been very clearly seen to stand or fall with

the reality of personality in man, these two—personality and freedom—really standing or falling with each other”; and again, “It will, then, be very evident that, in maintaining the positive metaphysical doctrine of freewill, the worth of virtuous training and habits is acknowledged, to use the words of Professor William G. Ward, as ‘not less inestimably great’ from the Libertarian side than on the Deterministic hypothesis. In so maintaining the freewill premiss to the theistic conclusion, we only need, and only care, to deal with actual psychical fact as we find it in ourselves and in others, at their and our best. There can, in our view, be no doubt of the deepening conviction, on the part of recent theistic philosophy of religion, that ethical and religious vitality are only to be maintained by a real freedom of the will being conserved, in face of every opposing tendency, whether pantheistic, or positivist, or pessimistic. We say ‘real freedom,’ for, call it an *abgeleitete Absolutheit* or derived freedom as you will, it is with this we are concerned.” While abiding too merciful to take my readers at present through the nine concentric circles of the “Inferno,” I would note how,

in the highest of these, sin is shown as returning upon the head of the lawless man himself. Un-speakably higher is the poet's purpose all through than merely to exhibit the punishment of Sin—even the purpose to show the unutterable pity and sadness of man's strange and awful misuse of freewill. He would have men know that sin, in every form and degree, means misery; and what, like such a poem, could have brought home to us—in the reflected light of its physical descriptions—conceptions which are moral and spiritual? Or where shall we turn to find the power of conscience more impressively set forth? Purlblind we must be if we do not feel the searching, invigorating, and uplifting power of such poetry for an age like ours, in which the "Inferno" of negation is ever near. I would further note Dante's putting lowest among the sins of passion that *accidia*—as the Italian has it—which, as later appears in the "Purgatorio," is none other than sloth, sullenness, moroseness, discontent, and gloomy wrathfulness. There cannot be a doubt of the persistent tendency, alike in the life and the literature of to-day, towards this very sin—let us brace ourselves so to call it—of

sadness. A sadness, this, which denies that there *is* any joy of the Lord to be our strength. Save Dante, none have treated this gloomy habit or tepid condition of mind with wiser, firmer hand in earlier times than "the angelic doctor" and the poet Chaucer—whose philosophy makes him at heart an optimist—or in later days than Browning, Ruskin, Tennyson, and others who follow in their wake. The strength of the joyous man is such as Schiller's saying in his fine poem on "Ideals" suggests,—*"Was war dem Glücklichen zu schwer?"* And why such fleeing this defective frame of soul but just because it really means man's denial of himself, which, I suppose, already means denial of his God? The lowest circles of the "Inferno" are reserved by Dante for those forms of alienated love—hate of God and man—which mark, with him, the completest corruption of that reason which he took to be man's peculiar gift. Yes, and last of all we come upon the deep-seated abode of that "Emperor, who sways the realm of sorrow."

I turn from Satan, champing arch-traitors in his triple jaws, to say that I am well aware of the speculative difficulties that can so easily be



raised here as to the reconciliation of the views of Dante, who, I certainly admit, shared the defects and blindnesses of his time. But at least we have seen how well he learnt what Beatrice had sent him into that deep material Hell to learn. For who, like Dante, has shown what sin both is and works, for body and for soul? Who, like him, has shown sin, stripped of all its wrappings, as it would come, with awful consequence, between a man's conscience and the laws of duty and of God? Or who, like Dante, has brought out into clear and bold relief, and with severe impartiality, the sublimely retributive aspects or issues of man's evil and wrong-doing? Yes, the very greatness of his work lies just in this, that he has been able to recognise, high above all finite sentiment and feeling, an absolute and immutable Justice which takes precedence of everything else, and in which, it should be said, ethical elements and ends were more present than Dante ever dreamed. There was "sweet fruit," he tells us, which these pains of the "Inferno" made him desire to win. No product monstrous and remote is Dante's Hell, but simply present reality with us all, when-

soever the soul sways from its own true harmony. Call the mind of Dante what you will, you cannot make it other than Christian. Here, as elsewhere, the philosophy of the Jerusalem which is above, and is mother-city of us all, is that towards which his thoughts are still tending.

If there is "infinite rigour" in this man taught of God, there is also "infinite love." None knew better than Dante that there are—

"two vast spacious things,  
The which to measure it doth man behove,  
Yet few there be that sound them,—Sin and Love."

Not something done to the sinner, but what the sinful soul of man does to itself—what a permanence in evil it brings about as, in spiritual result, it progressively grows more empty of God and more full of self—seems to be Dante's thought for us. He recalls for me the words of a modern mystical writer, who holds the principle of supreme selfishness to carry of necessity within itself "the grand element of the world of woe." This principle, this writer says, in its ultimate operation necessarily drives man "from everything else, and wedges him closer and closer in the compressed circumference

of his own personality ; so that he is not only at variance with God, and with all holy beings, but he is not at unity even with the devils themselves. The principle of love, terminating in self as the supreme object and exclusive of other objects—in other words, supreme selfishness—makes him at war with all other beings ; and it is impossible for him to be happy but in their destruction, which is also an impossibility. This is the true hell and everlasting fire.” I think we do well to remember that more can be said—even in our imperfect knowledge—about this sinking process of selfish personality than is generally considered, even by thoughtful persons. We should not do well to forget that the most obdurate selfishness known to us is precisely that sort which has been “enlightened.”

If these things be so, then, what hope for sinful man? The “Purgatorio” shall answer. Its painfully “steep ascent,” growing gradually easier with the mountain’s conical form, shall show how reason—or moral philosophy strictly—exerts its sway over the mind, leading to the correction of faults and mortifying of evils. Easy this hard process grows as the soul ascends

through successive circles of the Mount of Purification, because it is of process, rather than place, that the "Purgatorio," with its wealth of imaginative beauty, makes us think: a process present with us alway, in so far as spiritual conflict and development have become for us the great reality. Why, then, should not the "Purgatorio" appeal more deeply to our actual experience than either the "Inferno" or the "Paradiso"? Could not the "gentleness" of Dante, and his mighty grasp of the oneness of personality, make us spiritually greater here than we do oft allow him? Men do not often—in these times at least—come into the deeps of Hell's remorse: as seldom do they rise to roseate summits of Paradise; but Purgatory, in the sense of spiritual effort, of growing virtue or achievement, abides with and envelops us. Yes, for man, even when regenerate, is not forthwith made perfect, but finds, amid his spiritual powers, disruption, conflict, anarchy—finds reason arrayed against faith, flesh against spirit, vacillation against firm purpose. In substance the poet seems to say, Your goodness must not be dropped upon you, but must be won by effort: not in substance but in word he says, "the

human spirit doth purge itself." Because of the blessed results in which it issues, this purifying process is, with him, "solace" rather than "pain." It is for the penitent soul the path that makes for perfection. A worm is man—"born to bring forth the angelic butterfly." Yes, his will be, not the "butterfly" immortality of fame—which "comes and goes" like "hue of grass," or *color d'erba*, as our poem has it—but, as the "Purgatorio" finely shows, the true immortality of an ever-deepening conscious life. From out of all our sin, and death, and woe, is being slowly reared the unseen fabric of the city of God—the *Civitas Dei*, whose ideals are progressive and whose foundations eternal. In some way, then, must man atone or make amends for the sad misuse of his freewill. For no conception will satisfy Dante but actual freedom—man actually free because he actually loves and wills the good. Freedom is thus something to be *won*: is our latest moral philosophy in advance of that?

Apposite to this is what I have elsewhere written,—“We are disposed to claim for recent theistic philosophy that, with greater power as a spiritual philosophy, it has declared the real,

and not merely formal, freedom of man as a spiritual personality — of every man who has chosen so to live." Men have been feeling it almost new: in truth, they have but had a new apprehension of it in our time. Saint Augustine and the apostle Paul were no strangers to it. In the mind of Dante, the ethical principle of freedom as fixing fate is perpetually present. If only by long practice in right choosing are we raised above choice, if will thus becomes almost automatic, we need not be surprised to find that Dante does not feel "for flight within him the pinions growing" until he is very near the top of the purgatorial mount. Not until the topmost step of the long staircase has been reached does Virgil say to him—as Longfellow finely phrases it,—

"Free, and upright, and sound is thy freewill,  
And error were it not to do its bidding:  
Thee o'er thyself I therefore crown and mitre."

No subjection to Churchly teachings keeps reason from being crown of man's nature in the mind of Dante. The faith to which Beatrice shall hereafter call him will but be a faith which shall be the highest reason—reason

sublimed. Have the relations of faith and philosophy really got beyond this in more enlightened form to-day? Here, then, in the "Purgatorio" are humility and penitence and the beginnings of deep peace: we are never far from that idea of mediation in virtue of which man achieves goodness by laying hold of the Divine life in the shape of "grace,"—grace prevenient, awakening, and co-operant in its workings. It is precisely this communication of grace, free and supernatural in its working, which makes the practice of virtue always easier grow. This is just one of those points where, by comparison, I regard 'Faust' as weak compared with Dante's poem, for that gifted backslider, Faust, is wafted at last to heaven for hardly any better reason than that his soul has been touched with a certain spirit of self-sufficing endeavour. A great advance upon the "Inferno," it must be said, is all this,—so great, indeed, that souls—amazed at this their own desire—ascend to the presence of God. This gradual elimination of selfishness had been never wanting to them as an Ideal; and now, no more cleaving unto the dust; power comes in as a flood upon the will:

the Heaven is entered from which they go no more out. Dante makes us well aware that it is by the mediation of the Church man is so raised from his individualism into this social communion. There is, however, no need to forget that our true individuality is the starting-point which the Church must assume : it assumes this in order that it may go on to the social view of Christianity. I might say this in another form by remarking that our individuality exists in order to catholicity. Has not the "Purgatorio" taught us that the impediments to spiritual progress do lie within ourselves? Has it not said, as with apostolic accent, "If ye have not, it is because ye ask not, or because ye ask amiss"? Has it not revealed to us Ideal Goodness, shining for ever in heavenly beauty, and drawing us as with cords of love? Let speech of its solemn warden—"so worthy of reverence"—answer:—

“What is this, ye laggard spirits?  
What negligence, what standing still is this?  
Run to the mountain, to strip off the slough  
That lets not God be manifest to you!”

I think that, looking back on man, as we saw him in the gloomy forest of estrangement from



God, one finds not a little that may serve to recall the lines of the sainted Faber,—

“Is it hard to serve God, timid soul? Hast thou found  
Gloomy forests, dark glens, mountain tops on thy way?  
All the hard would be easy, all the tangles unwound,  
Wouldst thou only desire, as well as obey.”

Passing to the “Paradiso,” that part of the ‘Divina Commedia’ which has been least esteemed, I avow myself of those who think this neglect of the “Paradiso,” on the part more especially of English essayists and commentators, unwarranted. Let it be the part most difficult of comprehension, it is the part which, when comprehended, yields us the mind of Dante at its highest. Here, above all, he is without a peer, and towers alone in solitary grandeur. Who, like Dante, has dared depict the transcendent character of the heavenly sphere? Yes, and that, too, although he felt that—as A. J. Butler renders it—“to signify in words transhumanation were impossible.” What wonder that he should at last fail and cease under the ineffable and overpowering disclosures of Supreme Beauty and Eternal Goodness? More meditative, less stirring, than the Hell

or the Purgatory may be the "Paradiso," but that does not make it—with its profound, even if too profuse, teachings on philosophy and theology—any less valuable: I mean, of course, from the point of view of thought rather than poetry. Even as to poetry, it is just the exquisite grace, the supernal beauty, of his poetry, which has, to the perpetual glory of the *lingua volgare*, so wondrously wedded itself to his matter, truth, or thought. Even in the disquisitions with which we think we could dispense, the touch of genius still makes itself securely felt. I agree with those who believe that Dante was, when he penned the "Paradiso," as thoroughly conscious as man could be that he was then engaged in the highest and most momentous effort of his life. That is to say, he knew that those who should in after times enter most deeply into the spirit of his work here would be the chosen few—whom not even finely-pointed cynicism should dislodge—of every generation; but, because these few would be the very elect of the world of intellect—the choicest spirits that should come from God's creative hand—he gave himself to the work with all the intensity

of his maturest powers. These are they who should know that quenchless thirst for truth which the poet of the "Paradiso" sings, and who should feel what imperious obligation our very nature carries with it that we make the truth our endless quest. To those who lightly follow the track of his spiritually sublime movement he speaks a solemn word,—“The sea I sail has never yet been passed.”

Dante, under guidance now of Beatrice or Divine Wisdom (*Sapienza*), feels himself in a new and larger world, as he learns how Love can pilot souls through the vast sea of Being. Symbol to him of illuminating grace, we see, in a way which we can certainly never disentangle from love of her, the rapture of the poet in Divine goodness and beneficence. Who, like Dante—by his nine spheres of the Blessed in Paradise—has taught us the degrees of sanctity, of bliss, and of reward? The bliss of each ascent for him grows greater as the smile of Beatrice—by which she *persuades*—grows more beautiful. Her smile in the Heaven of Mercury—home of law—is such as “would make one happy in the fire.” Her radiance in Jupiter—

when he arrived at the "whiteness of the temperate star"—was so great that he had to be reminded that not in her eyes alone was Paradise. In the eighth heaven, not all the tongues of poets, he declares, would suffice to sing her smile. Such was, in part, for him, the battle of the "eyelids." A type or ideal—say it is still external to him if you will—is before him, which is none other than that of perfect and abiding Personality, highest of all possible, all progressive ideals. These things suggest what I acknowledge to be to me of greatest moment in this poem. I mean that she represents, so to speak, concrete, actual, and godlike *Personality*—Personality to which might be addressed such line as Tennyson's—

"Thou seemest human and Divine."

I cannot but think with any who hold that, firstly and chiefly, filling and making up the mind of Dante was just the awe-inspiring vision of personality, vast and Divine, which he would worthily represent. I hold that we have never hit the nerve of the poet's great argument till we have come clearly to see that the principle of per-

sonality had become to Dante the all-comprehending, all-vitalising principle of the world. Now I ask, What higher or worthier interest could this or any other poet call forth in us? That is why I do not disguise that therein lies his highest interest for myself.

Of 'Recent Advances in Theistic Philosophy of Religion' I have been unable to say anything higher than to write,—“It has, we claim, more deeply observed how essential is the Divine Personality to religion and virtue, which are, in their very nature and development, really impossible without the free, spiritual, and personal, to which in Deity the personal in man pays homage as to nothing beside. And indeed we take it that it has found the living religious consciousness not only crave the personality of God, but also carry in itself a subjective certainty of the Divine Personality. Such subjective certainty is a call, of course, to theoretic reason to scrutinise its bases, that it be not found to contain that which, objectively considered, is contradictory or impossible.” I come back to say that I conceive Dante's purpose to have been to show us “a beautiful soul in the making,”—to trace for us, that is to say, its rise

through all struggle and contradiction, till it stands out a self-conscious, self-directing *personality*—a purified *person*. Yes, for it is out of this resultant ideal self or personality that ethical harmony truly proceeds. Unpromising as the given elements and impulses may be, the end is sure as the mode is clear. So amazing is the ultimate spiritual development, that from the summits of Paradise you will see no less a marvel than—as Cary renders it,—

“The thorn frown rudely all the winter long,  
And after bear the rose upon its top.”

Even so does Dante make true personality—what he calls *la rosa in su la cima*—develop for us, as the “Inferno” element disappears out of our soul’s life, and as purgatorial sense of contradiction fades. What a really inspiring conception, then, is the “rose,” which now and ever blooms for us in Dante’s vision—the “rose” of rounded and expanding Personality—

“a Rose  
That may not yet its perfect Soul unclose,  
Lest angry winds should scatter or molest”!

A rose, indeed, is this whose growth upward and Godward, through rain, and frost, and fire,

and thunder, we have been witnessing hitherto, as Dante has conducted us ever towards the ineffable Rose of the Empyrean. Yes, for no environment but shall minister to the growth and development of true spiritual personality, till man shall soar on wings of aspiration to the Empyrean. The nucleus—the initial focus or dynamic centre—around which all this vast and wondrous conception of personality has for our poet gathered, is just the real and beautiful human personality of Beatrice. Because that human soul is so real, it shall not only persist, but also “blossom as the rose,” yea, and become, under immortal skies, itself a petal in the mystic snow-white rose of all-inclusive and eternal Personality. As one of our own poets has said—

“ The petals of to-day,  
To-morrow fallen away,  
Shall something leave instead,  
To live when they are dead.”

Speaking of recent philosophy of religion, I have elsewhere written what is germane to the subject before us,—“With this it must take full cognisance also of the relation which this finite but real personality of the Ego sustains

to that One, absolute, self-conscious Personality, which becomes intelligible to it only as it has recognised its own positive personality—its relation, in other words, to that One self-existing Reality which is the final resting-place of the severest rational thought.” And further,—“With the personality of Jesus Christ, the crown and climax of this problem of the active and originating power of personality are, for the philosophy of religion, reached, for, as we contemplate the *Person* of the Son of Man, does not a new and everlasting glory of personality for, and in, man burst upon our view?” There is certainly no broader or more ultimate basis to which such mystery can be referred than just to that of His Divine-human Personality. What a symbol Beatrice has now become of our deeper, more illumined knowledge of God! How Dante, gazing into those eyes of Beatrice, which are the demonstrations of Divine Philosophy, is swept into the closer presence of God! How the Beatrice of early faith glows with a love which is that of spirit!

It is in such wise that Dante has done what a German Church historian declares, namely,



“effected a reconciliation of the claims of love and religion.” Through all the windings of his poem, with its perfectly symmetrical form yet very heterogeneous elements, he pictures forth the joy of redeemed humanity in its growing power to receive the Divine Life in its fulness, related as it is to its Divine and Living Head. Only, it may be said that it would not have lessened the happiness of the blessed spirits in Dante’s Paradise—as it is apt to appear to us—if they had found some larger space for wonder and for joy over such a phenomenon as Dante himself presented. I say “larger,” for I cannot but account it an inaccurate procedure which has represented the blessed of Dante’s Paradise as neither affected by, nor interested in, his presence. Dante at any rate has so profited as to have given us, and given us for all time, as a great English historic writer has justly remarked, the quintessence or living substance and the final conclusions of the scholastic theology; and who would not prefer to take them from the hand of Dante to that of any other?

I suppose we may say that now we have passed from knowledge and insight, or even from struggle and aspiration, up to a realised oneness

with truth and with God—to a plane where there is communication to man of God's life, His mind, His spirit. What blessedness can be wanting, when God is the self-imparting Deity, Who makes us sharers of His ideal and infinite reality? But the issue of the contemplative life—the result of its insight, and the fruit of its aspiration—is real and satisfactory, for the issue is an identifying of ourselves with the Divine, or a rising into Paradise. Religion meant to our poet true but effortless activity—no pure passivity, but the action consequent upon the spiritual ideal being ever kept before us—that activity of the soul, or highest energy of the spirit, which makes it, in the phrase of one of our universally known hymns—"a living fire." Dante recalls for me the words of the philosopher Fichte, in his 'Vocation of Man,'—"My will is mine, and it is the only thing that is wholly mine and entirely dependent on myself; and through it I have already become a citizen of the realm of freedom and of pure spiritual activity." It is indeed in such spiritual activity that my spirit asserts itself, and, in its struggles with the forces of evil and negation, it overcomes only in virtue of its accessions of grace and strength from

the absolute and transcendent Being Who is its Life.

The poet, passing, as we have seen, into "pure light, light intellectual, full of love," saw the mystic rose of Paradise rise in circle upon circle of its celestial petals. What were they but the souls that had been bathed in God's own light? What but "the perfect flower of human time" of which the poet of the "In Memoriam" speaks? On that flower—that fair Heavenly Rose—the light-bearing angels of God descended. And when the great Saint Bernard had helped him to look more deeply into that light Divine—the vision broke! But what matter? Already it has shown us God as in the Universe, His "soveran light" extending to the "circumference" of the mystic rose. It has set Him forth as present also in the individual—yea, in the remotest petal of the "rose" of being. It has, too, summed all individuals, and depicted them in God, Who fills the "rose" with life and power. Yes, for it is just the basal thought of Dante's world-poem that all things which pertain to the world of truth, life, and reality are but as beams or rays emitted by that central, all-resplendent orb, which is

God, the Sun of souls. The crowning vision which awaits our poet is just the enraptured gaze upon the unutterable glory of that God, Eternal and Triune, whose transfiguring light shall leave the poet lost to all but Love. Now I ask, What is all this—when Dante's will and desire are henceforth revolved by the Love which moves both sun and stars—but to say that, while the mind of God is being for ever progressively uttered in the Universe, the soul of Dante is brought at length to something better—to God Himself? What but to say, in other words, that here at last we have the perfection of a will made wholly one with the will of God? What but the lesson we should, long afterwards, find Tennyson, in his own way, teach, in the "In Memoriam," of the blessedness of perfect conformity with the will of God, as reached through love?

"In la sua volontade è nostra pace."

Yes, "in His Will is our peace," says the "Paradiso" near its opening, and as he nears its close the poet declares that he has seen the Vision Divine—beheld Him Whom "eye hath not seen,"—only because, in saying this,

he feels that larger bliss is his. Is not the lesson one of an end—the end of perfect union with God—to be reached by the way of the blessed life rather than by paths cut out by the mere cognitive or understanding faculty? But this end of full-pulsed, rhythmic life, in union and communion with God, is not realised at the cost of our own personality, but by its maintenance and development amid the commerce, interaction, and interpenetration of the human will and the Divine. According to our poet, in this way has been *internalised*—in a single volume bound by Love — all that lies, like loose and scattered sheets or leaves, throughout the Universe.

No careful study of *il poema sacro* is possible without revealing to us how deeply imbued the mind of Dante was with the really abstract philosophic teaching of Aristotle, and, still more, how redolent his poem is of the religious and metaphysical spirit of St Thomas Aquinas. Perhaps I ought to remark that I am not quite able to endorse the representation of those distinguished writers who speak of the theology of Aquinas in a wholesale fashion as hopelessly out of sympathy with all that is

best in modern thought. It seems to me a more discriminating judgment is required: Aquinas was certainly no harbinger of reforming ideas, and his finely speculative genius kept well within the bounds of Catholicism; but I rather agree with those historians of mediæval thought who opine that his scholasticism has more to teach our time than it has always taken pains to learn. I hold that not only from study of the contradictions and shortcomings of the system of Aquinas—yes, and even from his spirit of speculative inquisitiveness—may we reap profit, but that there are also aspects, particularly on the ethical side, in which he is very far from being so entirely out of joint with the best results of modern thought as has been sometimes represented. To come back to Dante, I shall certainly make no attempt to “Protestantise” the poet, although I confess that it seems to me a somewhat peculiar gift which is able to evade any seeds of opposition to the Papacy in his poetry; I am content to admire the independence of his thought in matters political, the fearlessness of his strictures in things ec-

clesiastical, and the finely unconscious Deific power of the poet to exalt to heaven or thrust down to hell whom he pleases.

I think we have seen, in briefest compass, how the mind of Dante was moulded by the mediæval philosophy, with its strange and universal congruity, and how great was the power of living belief—of real faith—in him, a power that pulsates through all the quivering accents of his sublime and lofty spiritualism. No veil of doubt or passion—or even of pedantry—obscures for him, so ardent, pure, severe, and free, the Heavenly Vision. Beyond all others he has made the unseen real to us, and kindled in men the religious fervours of his own austere and lustrous spiritualism. Yes, and all with imperishable power and indelible effect. Blessing be upon Dante, then, and immortal praise, that, in so bringing highest Truth before us, he has been able to do so—to use the words of Tasso—in a form whereby that Truth,—


“robed in Song’s benign disguise,  
Has won the coyest, soothed the sternest minds,”—

for the space of six long centuries that have known the “sounding” of his “verse.”

# THE PHILOSOPHY OF 'FAUST'



to its philosophical significance that 'Faust,' as we find it, owes its place as a *chef-d'œuvre* in the literature of the world. I apply to this work the words of Edmond Schérer used in another connection,—“ If there is no philosophy, there is no meaning ; and if there is no meaning, what have we to do with it ? ” I am one of those who do not think any current indifference, or inability to interpret the Second Part of 'Faust,' has any right to keep us from seeing that, philosophically though not poetically, the Second Part is the greater—that which casts light upon the whole. I do not share Dr Wenley's judgment, in his able work on 'Aspects of Pessimism,' that the First Part “implies an entire philosophy,” which, if it had, would have been a highly pessimistic one. I hold it to imply a philosophy really incomplete, without the Second Part as key and supplement, and indeed Dr Wenley himself seems in some sort to recognise this. But to this subject we shall revert later. If there be left any of the abounding critical wisdom which has seen in 'Faust' only a beautiful and touching tale of love, we have here with that nothing to do. No ; not thus do we read the creative genius that called Faust and Gretchen into being, and gave



them popular shape or form. The fearfully and wonderfully didactic Goethe was a philosophic realist, to whom philosophy was a thing of life, and not simply of study, and who has for this very reason exerted so deep an influence of a truly philosophic character. If Goethe has been less of an inspirer than Dante, he is certainly more of a teacher—more than even our own Protean Shakespeare can be claimed to be. Let us set out from the encyclopædic Faust as symbolical, in his pangs of insatiable desire, his Titanic strength of aspiration—his “pulses of a Titan’s heart,” in Tennyson’s phrase—of mankind, as we see it sinning, striving, and winning. Finely typical of man is he who knows at once the longing after truth, and the despair of finding it. Certainly he recalls for us the words of Pascal, that “we have a powerlessness for determining truth, which no dogmatism can overcome,” that we have “a vague notion of truth, which no pyrrhonism can destroy,” and that we “cannot but wish for truth and happiness,” yet are “incapable of attaining either.” It is from the way in which it typifies or embodies the modern spirit and tendency that ethical worth accrues to ‘Faust.’ You may read, that is to say, in Faust as the

essential man, in his bold aspirations, in his mobile and all-consuming spirit of unrest, in his fall and ultimate salvation, the destiny of the human race. And where, as in 'Faust,' shall we find the amplitude of man's nature? We are at once made to see Faust communing with Nature as one spirit does with another: we see him even look into Nature's deep breast as into the bosom of a friend. Is it not a finely philosophic trait in Faust that he finds such Olympian serenity and luminous calm in the satisfactions which the contemplation of Nature affords? How deeply he felt before Nature's magnificence and beneficence, as its Divine harmonies and universal founts of life were disclosed to him! For undoubtedly the philosophic thought which underlay his nature-outbursts was that of endless transformations of eternal substance in a universal activity. No possible translation can bring out the fineness and the force of those nature lines early in 'Faust,'—

“Euch Brüste, wo? Ihr Quellen alles Lebens,  
An denen Himmel und Erde hängt,  
Dahin die welke Brust sich drängt—  
Ihr quellt, ihr tränkt, und schmacht' ich so vergebens?”

Ye breasts, where are ye? Ye fountains of all life, on which hang heaven and earth, to which the withered breast is pressed, ye flow, ye fill, and pine I thus in vain?

Goethe's hold on the unity of all nature's life and movement was such that he must be accounted in some sort one of the fathers of modern evolution. All honour to Darwin and his distinctive part in evolutionary discovery, but there are well-defined senses in which he was not

"the first that ever burst  
Into that silent sea."

Indeed, I shall not be going far out of my way if I say that the coherence of nature,—the idea of process in it,—was very present to Goethe—after Herder's conception of growth or the *fieri* of the outer world—and afterwards received a dialectical and metaphysical form from Schelling and Hegel. I take the creative process to have been to Goethe fundamentally the perpetual evolution of substance in ceaseless movement—from the womb of eternity. God is here, I suppose, being, rather than *a* Being, or *the* Being of theistic philosophers and theological people. The conception of indwelling Deity is, with Goethe, strong and marked, for to Goethe—who was,

like Lessing, devoted, not servilely, of course, to the Spinozan philosophy—the immanence of God had replaced unsatisfying conceptions of a Deity external to the world. It seems as though literature, rather than theology, had led the historic way in this connection, though it must, I think, be said that the interactions have been close and frequent. Matthew Arnold, in his 'Essays in Criticism,' has shown—as against Maurice—the qualities in Spinoza that most influenced and attracted Goethe to have been—not the tenets of "the child of the circumcision," as such, but—his views of universal nature as opposed to a narrow notion of final causes, and what may be called his actively stoical virtue. Certainly the spell of the Spinozan *ethics* for the author of 'Faust' never ceased. I think one is certainly justified in saying that Goethe did not allow himself to be entirely disciplined by Spinozistic teaching, any more than Schiller was by the Kantian ethics. We know in what respects Schiller did assuredly not find complete satisfaction in, or feel able to give full adherence to, the Kantian ethics. Now, the Spinozan ethics remained for Goethe a well of in-

spiration rather than a system for adherence, as could only be in the case of one who set but little store by individual systems. I am one of those who think that, if we adopt Kant's theistic test, and view a "Living God" as the only God of any interest to us, then Spinoza cannot be credited with holding by the self-consciousness and personality of Deity in such wise as would bring him within the theistic sphere, however freely we grant him pantheistic fervours and religious glow.

But just as Goethe did not simply follow the resigned and mystical quietism of Spinoza, so his contemplation of nature was touched with joyful strength by Leibnitzian optimism. When all is said that may be said, Goethe's relation to Spinoza is still parallel in important respects to the ancient relation of Lucretius to Epicurus, whose philosophical tenets the great poem of Lucretius was meant to expound. Thus Goethe does in certain clearly defined senses for Spinoza. Besides, it need hardly be said that if a philosophical chasm should seem to sever these two poets, Lucretius and Goethe, they are linked together by the majestic power of imagination

which is theirs in common. Not even the philosophical abyss between them may be so great as is often supposed, but I pass from that to say that there seems no lack of concrete justice to naturalism in Goethe's philosophy of nature. Professor Adamson has lately recalled attention to the need of such justice—and rightly so, no doubt, as against the effects of the great idealist systems. At the same time, while seeking to do such justice—to treat the natural or material as more than mere *Schein* of the spiritual—we may not forget what a standing menace to poetry and science itself exists in the modern readiness to join naturalism to these in ways whose disastrous results Mr Balfour has so ably exposed. Our philosophical poet, piercing through the perishable phenomena of Nature, seeks—in true Spinozan fashion, without doubt—their essential forms or laws, and finds in them—Leibnitz-like—one vast, sweet harmony. Hence you have, in the sublime lyric of the "Prologue in Heaven," this harmony of the Universe finely voiced in the Archangels' Song, in the interpretation of which by the astonished Shelley occur such fine, inspiring lines as these,—

"The world's unwithered countenance  
Is bright as at creation's day."

So is it, too, by Faust when he early exclaims,—

"How each the whole its substance gives !  
Each in the other works and lives,"

and closes the passage by the lines,—

"From Heaven through earth I see them pressing,  
Filling the all with harmony unceasing."

I think, with all this enthusiasm for nature-harmony, we could very well have stood more of kindred rapture, on Goethe's part, before the spiritual harmony begotten of the Christian faith. For he, of all men, might, I think—to judge by his needs—have known the worth of *inward* and spiritual harmony ; yes, he whose purpose it had ever been to make his own existence harmonious. This I say, although I think it may fairly be doubted whether the stock charges of selfishness in the Goethean self-culture proceed on any full or proper understanding of the case. However, what we do find is that Faust confesses his lack of faith, whose "dearest child is miracle," according to him.

But he knows, as I have said, no lack of long-



ing after the hidden founts of being: it is no solitary instance of this longing when he expresses, in the opening part of 'Faust,' the desire to know "the force" that binds "creation's inmost energies." His idealism will scale the very heavens, though it be that we shall see him—baffled in his attempt to reach, through rational speculation, truth absolute and essential—fall back on ancient revelation. Yet nature in its totality he cannot behold: the earth-spirit is more than he can bear. I do not think the wisdom of this perfect: if we are ourselves part of the earth-spirit, why should not—as Tennyson has it—"spirit with spirit" be able to meet? It is under the Spinozan influence that our poet makes evil less a hateful thing to Deity than the source of good and progress, worked out under His eternal and necessary laws. Says the Lord in the "Prologue in Heaven" (Miss Swanwick's version),—

" Ever too prone is man activity to shirk,  
In unconditioned rest he fain would live ;  
Hence this companion purposely I give,  
Who stirs, excites, and must, as evil, work."

So Mephistopheles—like the egoism which is

with us alway, and is sometimes of a bald type—is given as realist companion to the idealist Faust, though that former be son of chaos and spirit of negation. "The spirit that denies" may yet be made to subserve important uses in the economy of the world. The presence of Mephistopheles—who, "a cross between Voltaire and Caliban," sums in himself the metaphysic of evil—amid the celestial chants and harmony, is no thing of outer significance, but gives a clue to the whole drama, with its profound symbolic meaning. The egoistic or personal principle, taken to be necessary to man's elevation of himself, is, in the deepest temptings of a will which is free, made the leading factor of all he does. "This goitre of egotism," as said Emerson, has "its root in the cardinal necessity by which each individual persists to be what he is." Evil is in 'Faust' the power which, represented by Mephistopheles, "always wills the bad and always works the good." We shudder before its malignity: the willing surrender of Faust to the tempter naturally inspires us with moral terror. But evil is to Goethe part of the world-system from the

outset, is good in disguise, and is no mere after-result in an unforeseen order of things—in accordance with what we have seen of Mephistopheles having been given in the Prologue. It is, in fact, the basal thought of 'Faust' that evil is not a positive power—though Goethe, finely disregarding his own consistency, ultimately makes it so—or principle warring against the good, but is merely something negative. Nowhere does creative activity manifest itself in the world, but the touch of evil—of negation—is there to limit and to lessen. Yes, limitations of life, of the reason, of the heart,—are they not with us all, and with us always? How small our productiveness of good, how unsatisfactory our progress and activity, how fragile the links that bind us to life, on which our deepest loves depend! It is this evil, this limiting, restricting hand, which is in our poet's view, everywhere goading us on to goodness and advancement. Is it necessary, however, to charge on Goethe the theological inanity of making God the author of evil? Is it only thus he has learnt to know Mephis-

topheles? His interpretation of moral evil must, I think, be held as at least a too optimistic one. What right have we to treat evil as merely a necessary part, or element, in the life of goodness? Certainly sin—essential evil—has no mission here, progressive world though it be; its occupation is not only gone, but never should have been. The devil of Dante, and that of Milton—both fearfully and wonderfully made—are anachronisms: Faust's devil—though he has a "cold devil's fist"—is a being—shall I say?—formed for progress. The ways of this devil grow not obsolete: his influence never knows decline: he is sprightliest of guests to-day: he is with us always, faithful—to himself—to the end. Late in our drama, you will find him still mingle interior disquiet with Faust's desires and endeavours to elevate the race. A modern gentleman at least he is, keeping excellent pace with the times, polished and well versed in the latest philosophies and scientific theories. Yes, with, of course, an exquisite faculty for irony—and no end of *persiflage*—such as neither genius nor virtue shall resist or gainsay. A glacier-like gaiety is his:

finely does Margaret express her instinctive horror of one who "with no soul sympathises," and on whose face it is written that "he never loved." But it is no great liberty one takes if he chooses to doubt—as Margaret never could have done—whether Faust himself had ever truly loved. I think it rather hard to deny him such love: he only reads a more pointed lesson in our philosophy of life that his love did not remain incorruptible.

But, to come back to the devil, does Goethe not wish, by his changed and cultured devil, to teach us advance even in our notion of evil? But the Christian idea of evil abides in its power over us, boundless as may be our admiration of the poet's skill in working out his own idea. Yes, for of that idea as an aid, alike in the theoretic and the practical solution of the problem of evil, we certainly say, as was said of Goliath's sword, that there is none like it. Finely parallel to the effect of the Easter bells in saving from suicide the maddened and baffled Faust, is the influence of the Christmas bells on Tennyson, so that the grief of the poet of the "In Memoriam" becomes "sorrow touched with

joy." It is to be said that, through the whole Margaret episode, the eudæmonistic character of Faust's philosophy is still painfully apparent, so that the thought of his own happiness or personal wellbeing swallows up all thought of others. He is a long way from seeing, what the latest German writer on ethics—whose work I have just had the pleasure to bring under British notice in 'Mind'—tells us, almost as a matter of course, that individual eudæmonism cannot be maintained, but must be turned into eudæmonism that is social. While this priority of society remains true in certain collective aspects, the good of society—which cannot be said to have any such thing as a social consciousness—must in the end be subservient to the good of the individual. Yes, and by no one in recent times has the good of the individual—the paramount good of individual personality—been more finely exhibited or insisted upon than by the ethical writer to whom I have just referred. It is the needed thought of privation, resignation, renunciation, which Goethe's idealist friend, Schiller, has so finely wrought out in those grand philosophical poems which make for humanistic

ideals not less truly than do the nature-studies of Goethe. It is this merely separate self which must be renounced, must die, if Faust is to know the "everlasting Yea" of life's true self-fulfilling. In this sense he must die to live, but the eye of Goethe rested rather on the life or self-development than on the death or self-mortifying. He, who was so poor a hater, yet hates abstinence or renunciation for its own sake—he will fulfil rather than destroy. The duality of our nature, then, shines out in the philosophy of Faust, with the discontent due to our being flesh as well as spirit, and limited by all that is individual while aspiring after that which is universal. He has the poignant pain of the man whose moral world doubt has shattered, and whose is the spiritual atrophy which is hopelessly incapable of believing.

Striking and beautiful is the contrast between Margaret's narrow, well-defined faith, and the broad, universal view and everlasting tolerance of Faust. The very impersonation of pure and simple nature is she: almost blest is her ignorance; but what misuse of knowledge in Faust! Speechless is he when the catechising Margaret

speaks her fear that he is no Christian (*denn du hast kein Christenthum*). Not his grasp of general law, nor his deep love of science, nor his hold on true philosophy, shall save Faust. But yet it is the purpose of Goethe's philosophy to work out salvation for him, as we shall see. In the famous "creed," or pantheistic confession of his faith, Faust by no means resolves religion into feeling—*Gefühl ist alles*—in a way which can be held truly representative of Goethe's philosophy, unless it is carefully remembered that, in the "creed" passage itself, feeling is so wedded to thought that it is upon "heart *and* brain" throng the visible and the viewless forces of nature. The religion of "the deed"—of healthy and sound action—was his: the forces of goodness must, with him, be ever put in exercise. On the theme of God and the world he again touches here, so that the strength of his thought is seen to lie in its living hold on immanence—though I forbear to deny the poet transcendence after a deep sort,—“The All-Enfolder, the All-Upholder, holds and upholds He not thee, me, Himself?”

A rapt and living worshipper of the God in



Nature Goethe remains to the end. I agree with those critics who do not see any reason why Goethe's realism should not dwell in harmony with true religious idealism. And when, at the close of the First Part, Margaret is "saved," are we to be content to say, with Mr Lewes, in his interesting 'Life of Goethe,' that what we have been seeing is "the sacrifice of the future to the present," the "blindness to consequences caused by the imperiousness of desire," and the way in which men daily barter their souls for passing pleasures? Patent lessons of the play, of course, these are; but are we to be content with seeing Faust given over to the devil, and so to hurl the whole human race, with him, down to hideous ruin, with loss of all ideal and aspiration? No; the philosophy of Goethe is too optimistic—or at least he is too great a meliorist—for that: we await the completion in the Second Part of the poet's great design, for we shall see Faust rise out of the ashes of his abasement—not always so great as the critics in Faust's interest have made it—and mount the heavens after his soaring ideal.

I do not mean that here, in the First Part,

a deep remorse does not find place. I should not like to be able to read, when alone, the scenes in which Margaret is concerned, and never know a moistened eye. Not without a winsome humanness does Faust appear to us as love wells up in his heart at thought of the tear-swept face of his beloved—a love not less pleasing to us, I think, because it carries less of a self-righteous tinge than that of Tennyson's Arthur towards Guinevere. The Gretchen tragedy is, however, treated by our poet too much as simply episodal in the development of Faust. Yes, even although much may be forgiven a repentance which is in deed, and not simply in emotion. Deep does not call unto deep in language of penitential remorse and cries of an anguished heart, as we have a right to expect in Faust. What a Faust we should have had, if he had sounded the deeps of "repentance unto life"! As it is, when his feet have wellnigh slipped—I mean "wellnigh" as touching ruin lasting or perpetual, as distinguished from temporary lapse in evil—we find him, at the beginning of the Second Part, assume a loftier form of eudæmonism, and rise into

higher states of being. Here, in the Second Part, Faust finds that happiness is not to be sought as a distinct and independent object—this is indeed a prime lesson of the Second Part. Not in seeking of his own felicity, but in seeking of others' good, finds he happiness in such an hour as he thinks not of it. A literary setting, let it be said, of the lesson which some of our finest mystical writers have inculcated from the religious side, that happiness—the ancient *beata vita*—comes to us only when the direct quest of it has been abandoned. The philosophy of Faust finds at last how true it is that to lose one's life for Christ's sake is to find it. For Faust—let it be said—is not to be holden of the devil. And the whole human race, typified in him, is not to be hurled to hopeless ruin. Faust transcends the discontent of his nature, surmounts its ethical dualism, and falls only to rise in newness of the spirit's strength.

The weak point in the philosophy of Faust is just this, of course, that the quest of knowledge, as opposed to the choice of sensual pleasure, can scarcely be regarded as an ade-

quate foil for bringing out the deep need of ethical discipline which pertains to man's un-subjected nature. A new ideal of *Bildung* or culture and intellectual achievement now seizes him. He begins to gain slow mastery over the devil, and to recover the forces of the will. But one must say, I think, with Mr Hutton—who somewhat errs by defect as Carlyle does by excess of admiration—that this mastery of Faust—like Goethe's own—came rather of resolute absorption in the present than of real influx of spiritual power.

Now, in touching on the Second Part, I take leave to say that it is surely time to quit the painful and depressing custom of critics and commentators—for the most part—to treat this Part as mere classical phantasmagoria, devoid of real and rational meaning, as a product, in fact, of senility and sterility. One can, of course, only be sorry that not only that great—though by no means impartial—French critic, Edmond Schérer, but also critics of our own of the calibre of Matthew Arnold and Richard Holt Hutton, should have failed to do perfect justice to 'Faust,' and—while showing such large appreciation—

should in particular have come short of apprehending the value and significance of its Second Part. Professor Seeley, too, with a strange air of helplessness, asks, "Who can make much of the Second Part of 'Faust'?" Certainly I do not share these judgments: I range myself on the side of those, however rare or few, who admit its poetic inferiority, but view as higher its philosophical significance, whereby it pertains to, and illuminates, the organic whole as part of the poet's primal intention. It is rather in respect of its interpretative significance I say so, than as meaning to imply inferiority of philosophical conception in the First Part. The First Part, indeed, is particularly philosophical, in virtue of its typical conceptions and its character delineations. The Second Part lacks, of course, the passion of the First; its erudite air makes itself more consciously felt; it bears more evident traces of philosophic intent and prolonged manipulation on the part of its author. Should we, however, yield, with Professor Seeley, to hinting at "signs of decay," and to resting content with a mere claim that "assuredly it is not prosaic"? I should sooner lean to the

judgment of Heine, that the magic of this book is indescribable—though it be not the superb literary triumph of the First Part. While much in the Second Part, with its generally less sapid and spontaneous thought, cannot be defended, I am yet free to come into some accord with Emerson when he says that the Second Part is a philosophy of literature set in poetry. Yet I would not have it thought that there are not many points in the criticism of Mr Lewes, for example—his criticism, I mean, of the Second Part, with its forsaking the domain of Art for that of Philosophy—with which one is bound to sympathise, not to speak of other serious faults on which he does not touch.

It was inevitable that what Caro, of the French Academy, speaks of should happen, and that in heightening and enlarging his theme in the Second Part away from individual interests, Goethe should render it stranger to humanity. Does not the whole current mode of treating the Second Part witness to this? We are to see, in the Second Part, how Faust liberates himself from his despairing plight, how he will seek a repentance of no mere emotional and evanescent

character, but of nobler deed and worthier practice. A repentance this, let me say, not so remote of kin from a true evangelic repentance as men oftentimes suppose.

It is to be plainly said that some parts of our drama are here but loosely attached to the whole — a whole consequently less organically developed than one could wish. Its poetic inspiration is certainly hindered, rather than helped, by the speculative treasures poured into it. Yet who would not forego the loss in respect of poetic form for the genius that shines and atones through all? Already in the case of Helen, ill-fated beauty, Faust has learnt that the ideal is reached through no violent outbreaks of passion, but by progressive and symmetrical growth of the powers of heart and head. Yes, not in art alone, but, as we shall later find, in every domain, there is—as I believe Faust would teach us—a beauty of the ideal which lures us on, that the ideal may become real. Such is the law of inspiration; and such the law of progress. Later, in the Philemon and Baucis incident we shall find symbolised, in the unbending and ill-fated opposition of that aged

couple, the same need of maintaining a progressive spirit before the changing issues and enlarging currents of time—a spirit just as hard to be maintained by the scientist and the politician as by the philosopher and the theologian.

It will be stupid, as well as sad, if we allow ourselves, like that aged pair, to die of sheer fright because of the changes coming over our world! And yet it must be plainly said that we know little of the laziness and the selfishness of human nature if we do not know how far from easy this is to be done. I know, of course, there are ruthless results in the passage not to be desired, but I am now concerned with the lesson for us most needful to be learned in the wisdom of life. It is a lesson read to us by the world-conquering Faust, as he with resistless energy presses on to make tributary all things in the domain of knowledge or the territory of life. A lesson which, in the religious aspect of it, might be forcefully put in the words of a recent American writer—that “unbelief is fossilisation, and fossilisation is sin.” The progress, the improvement, of the race is for Faust



the sanctifying light for the powers of the will. To him such action will be everything; the glory thereof will be nothing.

The baccalaureate scene, in which Mephistopheles plays active part, is supposed to have been a satire upon the transcendental philosophy of Fichte, which had found a thriving existence in the University of Jena. Well, Fichte's philosophy is not mine, and hardly anybody else's, but it is not a philosophy to be despised, notwithstanding that it leaves us enveloped in mists of subjective, or, more properly, ethical idealism. Was it not he that universalised the Kantian attitude of appeal to our larger self? What does not the method of the Hegelian philosophy owe to the *Wissenschaftslehre* of this reviled philosopher, with its doctrine of the development of mind? Has not he numbered a Herbart and a Schopenhauer among his debtors? This is not, of course, to overlook how fundamentally defective the philosophy of Fichte from its own viewpoint was; as Chalybäus puts it, in respect of "the incompleteness of its Idealising, inasmuch as in its very principle, thinking as being the *subject*—and yet without an object—was affirmed

as that *individual* definite subject or Me." The author of 'Faust' was, in truth, much less troubled—despite all the seriousness that was so marked a feature of him—by abstract thinking, than the bold, speculative, and unsatisfying Fichte. Pregnant thinker as Goethe was, we cannot forget how his disregard of method kept his own philosophic thought from assuming any really systematic form. It is, besides, always easier—even for a Goethe—to revile than to refute the philosophic outpourings of a one-sided but pure and noble soul. It shows the extraordinary conjunction and variety in 'Faust'—for the eclectic tendency of Goethe is strong—that we pass from this philosophical diatribe to find Goethe vent his scientific dislikes on what may be called the philosophy of vulcanism—a subject which occupied the elaborate and interesting presidential address of Sir Archibald Geikie recently before the Geological Society of London.

The author of 'Faust' ranges himself on the side of the so-called Neptunism—the side of orderly and slow development under the reign of law, with a secondary place for agencies of catastrophic might or cataclysmal violence. This

scientific temper of Goethe, whereby he trusted in evolution rather than revolution, harmonises with his unsympathetic attitude towards the French Revolution, with which he did not want to be disturbed. Here, as elsewhere, the attitude of Goethe was due, I think we may allow, less to any selfish indifference or indolent quietism than to a preoccupation which had become to him a prime necessity—it may even have been a prime duty. Here, as in so much else—his inter-maxillary bone discovery, and his teachings as to the typical plant, for example—Goethe seems, in virtue of his plastic powers of mind, to have anticipated, with fine prophetic instinct, the subsequent course of scientific speculation, which has been in the direction of that *via media* of a modified Uniformitarianism,—though, as Lord Kelvin remarks, such middle path is not generally the safest in scientific speculation.

Different views may be, and no doubt have been, taken of Goethe's endeavours to fuse poetry and science—in both of which he took the same great interest—but I am of those who regard it as a limited or *borné* view that poetry should not

bathe and renew itself in the fountains of science. What should better occupy the mind of the poet than the laws of sun and star in their massive simplicity, and the vast complexities of nature-relations? Such an interest in astronomy and geology it was which helped Tennyson to speak to his age with the power he has done. And what but science—*rerum cognoscere causas*—shall reveal to the poet the true greatness of nature? But, of course, I am not to be taken as justifying the use which Goethe—this poet of reality—may always have made of science in his poetry. The spirit of the inductive philosopher was, no doubt, his, but I agree with Professor Seeley in thinking that Goethe was never a "mere cold realist." We pass to learn from Helen's union with Faust the need that the ancient sensuous appreciation of the Greek be wedded to the modern spiritual insight of the Goth, which can only be, I suppose, as the Gothic mind pours its treasures at feet of Greek loveliness. To do so is, with Goethe,—now become classicist, after Winckelmann,—no mere demand of taste, but means, in some sort, salvation. One cannot but in this connection recall what Mr Hutton in his 'Essays Theological

and Literary' says of Goethe himself—his "calm superior glance" into "the mystery around but never into the holiness above him," although, with all its fine characterisations, I am unable to regard Mr Hutton as in this Essay, quite at his best, since he appears to stand too much outside the Goethean ideals to be able to do them perfect justice.

I pass to say that æstheticism was unable to satisfy Faust, who, as a moral and spiritual being, now seeks his happiness in the activities of altruism. Yes, for you can no more cut happiness off from altruistic love, than, to use the fine figure of Cudworth, "a sunbeam here upon earth can be broken off from its intercourse with the sun, and be left alone amid the mire and dirt of the lower world." Of course, we do not cease to be egoists, to be ourselves, when we become thus altruistic, and see an *alter ego* in every brother, but we are *both* at one and the same time. This altruistic ideal it is which now inspires Faust's brave philosophy of life, and makes his being quiver with aspiring delight even when, in hour of death, he apostrophises the flying moment,—*"Stay, thou art so fair!"*

This fatal cry, which Faust should have shunned to make, we too must avoid, for does it not belong to the essence of our temporal consciousness that we must not rest in the present, but ever press on to a higher good in a moment still to come? It abides spiritually and philosophically true that in no joys or good of the present moment can the Divine and satisfying be found. To address to the passing moment, "Stay, thou art so fair," is indeed to court death—the death of aspiration, the death of the ideal. The selfish isolation of the individual has now in Faust been nobly replaced by a salvation which means loss of self and consecration to the universal, in pursuance of that world-view of Christianity which was, no doubt, the poet's quest. I make no question of the nobility and desirability of the salvation sought by Faust. What I certainly cannot agree with is the way in which the author of 'Faust' implies, as the fact still stands, that man's redemption is self-wrought, the way in which—whether he can be charged with pride and self-sufficiency or not—he gives the impression of no need of higher help or supernatural agency from without. Such an attitude is none the less

questionable that leading German theologians may still be found who teach, in effect, the same thing. When we see Faust, after such life as was his, wafted without more ado to the Heavenlies, we must surely feel that this is salvation made easy with a vengeance, but made so with a manifest lack of depth and thoroughness in the disposal of matters of sin and guilt. But to return. At the point where we now stand, optimism and pessimism alike seem to fade from our view, and we are brought by Goethe to accept the present without—such is his Hellenic style of viewing life—caring overmuch for future fears or wishes unfulfilled.

Towards the close of the Second Part, we have the faith of Faust voiced by Pater Profundus, who sings the creative and enfolding power of Deity.

“So Love, almighty, all pervading,  
Doth all things mould, doth all sustain.”

Before I speak of this love in nature, let me remark how the nature of love to Goethe—for man is to him climax in the unity of nature—seems such as to recall for us the lines of Cole-



ridge ; yes, of Coleridge, who of all men maintained so strange a silence as to Goethe,—

“ All thoughts, all passions, all delights,  
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,  
All are but ministers of Love,  
And feed his sacred flame.”

Yes, in this progressive universe all things so minister to Love—to Love, which is at once the source and the consolation of the world.

Now, is there any reason why we should not seek to enter more into this poet's reverence for the revelation which Nature brings to us? What eternal and creative reason, what eternal activity, what everlasting love, reside in Nature for the author of 'Faust' we have seen. But it cannot be said that personal Deity—in any clear and full sense of the expression—shines out behind his nature-communion. Indeed, I think we must hold his position vague and unsatisfactory just here where it should have been bright and inspiring. The truth is, he succumbed, like many another great spirit, to the ghostly fear—so I account it—of limiting Deity by ascribing to Him personality. But



as I hope soon to deal with the mistaken attitude of those who thus confound the accidents of personality with its essence, I shall abstain from saying more now. For Faust, as the First Part shows, all that can be said of the Highest is—"I have no name to give it": the name to him is "sound and smoke," so little grips he the Infinite Personality. And yet I would not withhold from Goethe somewhat of the ancient Hebrew reverence that feared to name the name of Jehovah; for that some such feeling was his is, I think, manifest from the creedal or confessional portion in the First Part. There, indeed, we find Faust ask of Carlyle's "awful Unnameable" of the Universe,—“Him who dare name?” (*wer darf Ihn nennen?*) Nor should Goethe's fine—and for our own age, much needed—insistence elsewhere on reverence, as the very soul of the Christian religion, be here overlooked.

Finely does the self-determination of Faust rise superior to every Mephistophelean stratagem, so that, at close of the Second Part, we see him rise through ever-ascending scales of being. His spiritual being moves on ethical

plane such that these evil influences come not now nigh him. We have Pater Seraphicus announcing the sustenance or nurture of spirits (*der Geister Nahrung*) to be none other than eternal, self-revealing Love. The way of salvation Faust is brought to see, but he sees it, I think, as leading to a land that is very far off. Thitherward one, "formerly named Margaret," becomes for him spiritual guide, in manner not unlike the Beatrice of Dante; while to the idealism of such love there is wedded, I should say, a rapture that reminds one of Spenser's fine "Hymn of Heavenly Love." This, let me say, appears to me a far loftier, as well as far more unified and consistent interpretation, than that of those who would force Helena—who comes not into view in the First Part at all—into being the Beatrice of this Divine Comedy. Under veil of such symbolism Love is a Divine or spiritual force actually to redeem, yet met it must be by outgoings of our own aspiration and effort, since it is only of the man of such unswerving will that it is said—"him can we aye deliver"! This love it is which, so meeting our aspiring life, forms that alluring power of

which—in Bayard Taylor's fine rendering—it is said in the "Chorus Mysticus,"—

"The Woman-Soul draweth us  
Upward and on!"

*Das Ewig-Weibliche  
Zieht uns hinan.*

*There* is the triumph of humanity—of humanity in its misery and its greatness—in Faust. Of course, Faust is for us first a man—a man of like passions with ourselves: that is just why the victory of purifying love in him has power with us, and prevails. In the triumph of man out of all his trials, as we read that triumph in Faust, we see, as one has said, how "every deeper philosophy has conceived the human fate as the struggle of two natures,—the one positive, asserting, desiring expansion—the other, limiting and restricting." What never fails us, in 'Faust,' amid all this failure and conflict, is just love's ideal—the ideal of pure, exalted love and service—*das Ewig-Weibliche* of a daring phrase which ever draws us "upward and on." Surely this Dantesque ideal or vision of Love Divine may exert all high, all needful influence over us without the result necessarily reaching to such

a mawkish sentimental issue as that of having "a motherly Father in heaven, with a sisterly brotherhood and a feminine conscience upon earth."

Now, has not the Second Part of 'Faust' completed the conceptions of the First, and shown that, however the individual unit or solitary soul may fail of its Titanic aspirations, not one thing shall fail the race, as such, of all that of which humanity has the potency and the promise?—a result which may be said to correspond with the stress of the sociological teachings of our time. To a just emphasis on this broader foundation of our race-nature I certainly make no objection, although seeking to do justice to individuality and human personality. I am in cordial agreement with a learned and esteemed German correspondent who, in a letter just received by the present writer, remarks, "Der Mensch ist doch nicht *nur* ζῶον πολιτικόν," and who thinks we of this time fail of perfecting individual and independent personality. As I have remarked in a recent article, vital individualism—when it shall be attained—shall be beginning rather than end. For there

is a solidarity of our race—to which, with Faust, the pure glory of *Menschlichkeit* has become an ideal—in virtue of which redemptive agency must descend not alone to the effects of individual will, but must find broad basis for a life of redeemed humanity, in which the great principle of spiritual co-operation shall find free play. I am individual, and I am free, but my freedom and my individuality are rooted in the race to which I belong, and why should I wish them otherwise, if that could be? Solidarity and freedom must still be allowed to dwell peacefully side by side.

I come back to say that life was to Goethe—philosophic realist and most versatile of geniuses—no comedy of errors, but a process of education in which the orderings of the Master were not really stupid, and in which, therefore, we do not see the scholar annihilated or destroyed on the day that school tasks are done. What we do see is the spirit of man rise, from out life's labyrinthine way of errors, into an immortality of higher and more spiritual existence, whose splendours no man knows. Such is the end given to 'Faust' by that same Goethe who was

optimist enough to say that existence would still be a duty, were that existence but for a moment. The large-minded poet has—let us be thankful for it—transcended the abstract issues of his own pantheistic philosophy, and made us no such transient phantoms. And who would not willingly see the philosophical kingdom suffer violence, and the violent take it by force, when it is by the hand of a Goethe, who, with a power to which none, save Dante, may lay claim, brings down to us the glories of immortality?

What a peerless philosophical poem—weighted with a rich philosophy of human life and character—his 'Faust' is, must already, I think, be very evident, and the amazing universality of his genius—as completely at home with the spirit of antiquity as with the conceptions of the modern mind—very apparent. Perfect his philosophy of life may not always be, and incomplete may remain his setting forth of the last good and the highest activity open to us, but if—as Victor Hugo said—the great problem is to restore to the human mind something of the ideal, then Goethe has in 'Faust' laid the whole round world under deep and lasting obligation.

The world will never forget how he has enforced progressive development as the essential mode by which, as conditioned beings, we shall reach the ideal—the perfection of love. Nor shall it forget how he—"the strong, much-toiling sage, with spirit free from mists, and sane and clear"—has sealed his teaching by his own mighty example, as himself

"The man who, most of men,  
Heeded the parable from lips Divine,  
And made one talent ten" !

THE  
PHILOSOPHY OF TENNYSON



"Every great poet is a philosopher by instinct and inspiration."—VINET'S *Philosophy*.

"Poetry refuses to be made over as the handmaid of any one philosophy."  
—Principal SHAIRP'S *Aspects of Poetry*.

"Poetry in its entirety, like philosophy, prosecutes a search for the absolutely true."—WENLEY'S *Aspects of Pessimism*.

"Philosophy is, *in the end*, at one with poetry."—Prof. E. CAIRD'S *Essays on Literature and Philosophy*.

"Philosophy is the hero of poetry."—NOVALIS.

"Hold thou the good : define it well :  
For fear divine Philosophy  
Should push beyond her mark."

—TENNYSON'S *In Memoriam*.

"O Studious Poet, eloquent for truth !  
Philosopher ! contemning wealth and death,  
Yet docile, childlike, full of Life and Love."

—COLERIDGE'S *Tombless Epitaph*.

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF TENNYSON.

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“**B**LAMELESS KING” was Alfred Tennyson among poets of his time. By no lover of quintessential art, by no soul endowed with any real meditative power or any “melodious feeling” for poetry, will this singularly progressive poet ever be neglected. Philosophic apprehension and depth, with sympathetic modern feeling, are, one may almost say, never wanting in this poet, whose limitations, let it be said, are both fewer and less obtrusive than those of some of our greatest poets. Whether or not we choose to regard him as having always given full and rounded expression to Christian faith, and whether or not there have been others—or at least that other named Robert Browning

—who have voiced truths it was not given the Laureate poet so to seize and sing, Tennyson has, with sweetness of poetic expression all his own, given utterance to the ideals and the brooding doubts, the aspirations, hopes, and thoughts, that peculiarly pertain to our time, and has been able, as none other, at once to arraign its evils and to embody its spirit. If he had not—and I do not think he had—the philosophic insight or the originality of thinking power that marked the genius of Browning, he was certainly more of a vivid and purely poetic genius—perfect in his harmony of spirit and form—with the compensating power that the flow of his poetry ran along such clear and limpid channels.

While Tennyson felt that the artist must be thinker no less than craftsman, he never lost the feeling for perfection in his art: poet and artist were in him twin natures which nothing could put asunder. Faultless in taste he might not always be; from looseness of structure and redundancy might not be always free; but sureness of touch, grace, melody, artistic aloofness, strong love of Anglo-Saxon phrase, are with him always—though not equally—to the end. Mere

technique held him not ; the clearness of his perceptions was wedded to an unwonted strength of intellect. Greater speculative minds and stronger experts in research the age has certainly not lacked ; but who, like Tennyson, has given to thought Imagination's wing ? Past, present, and future came within the sweep of his great vision : the past he could revive, idealise, glorify ; but his pliant mind was able to interpret and enhance the present ; it could with onward reach of speculative wisdom forecast the future and the unknown. Although to him the pleasures of Memory were so great, many of the anticipated joys of life's morning had for him become "staled by frequency, shrunk by usage," so that we almost wonder he was able, through all the disillusion, to flee the despairing pessimism of the time, and to maintain his high idealistic faith in the future. In fact, I think his unfailing idealism, his sublime faith in the future, is just that in him which we may most earnestly covet.

"Call me rather, silent voices,  
Forward to the starry track  
Glimmering up the heights beyond me  
On, and always on !"

When our poet looks out on Nature, he does so with the insight and meditative power of Wordsworth, with the colour command of Keats, with the musical skill of Shelley in his exquisitely melancholy lyrics, with the vigour of Byron *minus* the moodiness of his nature-passion, and with reverent love unknown to the artificial adoration of Pope. As he had a larger share of the spirit of man than was given to Wordsworth, so he had a closer communion with Nature—that commerce of the soul with Nature which M. Schérer claims pre-eminently for Wordsworth—than can be claimed for Browning. I am inclined to agree with those critics who do not find nature to be to Tennyson the living thing it was to Wordsworth, to whom there was deep philosophic ground for nature being such living reality, in that for Wordsworth Nature exists—or one might better say, lives—in God no less than does man. Nature could thus not be to Tennyson the dear, delightful friend she ever was to Wordsworth—a friend that “never did betray the heart that loved her.” But, with less reflectiveness in his handling of nature, Tennyson has higher pictorial power in his nature delineation.

tions. Such philosophy of nature as was his must therefore be, I think, a far less vital, less suggestive, and less inspiring thing than Wordsworth's. When our poet makes matter so much a lifeless thing—so little a thing of living spirit—he is, I take it, but little—strange to say—in line with either the best poetic, or the deepest philosophy, influences of the period. How different his dead or mechanical nature is from such a sense of living spiritual presence—of an ideal element—in all creation as we find, for example, in the philosophy of Lotze! It is yet perhaps only just to add that no one could have better exemplified than he—whom Kingsley calls our “greatest naturalistic poet,” for several centuries—the words of Thoreau,—“Man cannot afford to be a naturalist, to look at Nature directly, but only with the side of his eye; he must look through and beyond her; to look at her is as fatal as to look at the head of Medusa,—it turns the man of science to stone.”

The truth remains that the poet was yet touched overmuch with the merely scientific way of viewing nature. That he did so constitutes part of his distinctive genius, so render-

ing him wondrously sympathetic with an age given over to scientific modes of looking at all things. If—as has sometimes been said—nature meant to Shelley evolving love, if she meant to Wordsworth evolving thought, I agree with those who think that she was hardly less dear or less suggestive to Tennyson than to either of them, because to him the God of nature might be more real. For, in spite of all I have just been saying, the Divine life is, no doubt, present to Tennyson in nature, which he views so largely from the outside that it does not reveal to him the life Divine as it otherwise might have done, and as it, in fact, did, to Wordsworth and Coleridge and Shelley. It was the deep simple faith in the divineness of Nature which, in the eyes of Kingsley, constituted the differentia of Tennyson. But his love of nature—and this is his merit—never kept him from being prophet of a spiritual universe, and of the imperishable soul in man, even though one might have sometimes welcomed in him a greater dash of the defiant, and a stronger streak of the non-conforming spirit.

Of his services to religious thought, a notable

one has been the help which, whether we regard him as an original thinker or not, he has afforded in bringing us back from theology to true religious feeling—feeling so expressed as to mean for us, in the sanity and serviceableness of its piety, growth and progress in simplicity and spiritual strength. Thereby theology has become vivified. Not but what he escapes—thanks to the influence of Newman—the shallowness which sees not the need that the wisdom of the new time be born of the old, for he keeps watchful eye upon the past which was to him “treasury, not tomb.” Yet no one is more alive than Tennyson to the need of new and larger moulds for truth; so does he vivify and glorify the old. He “restores in richer beauty the crumbling fabrics of past philosophy.”

A striking feature of his poetry, too, is that, while still bearing in its bosom the quintessence of the thoughts and aims of our time—aspirations “wild as aught of fairy lore”—it has in it another note than that of Matthew Arnold’s unsolaced sadness. The fountains of joy are, in the subtle, restrained, and severe, yet withal buoyant, Arnold, dried up, because faith has



fled. Arnold did not know the resisting power of faith in face of the insurrection of Agnosticism, as did Tennyson.

"Ah! sure within him and without,  
Could his dark wisdom find it out,  
There must be answer to his doubt."

This confidence at least our poet cherished, when, as Shakespeare in "King John" has it, "that surly spirit, melancholy," made the poet's spirit "heavy."

Though we may say that there is melancholy—and dreamy wistful regret, in fact, overmuch sadness—in the later Tennyson as in Arnold, whose melancholy is always of the mellow type, yet Tennyson, hopeful and reverent, is far removed from those despairing tendencies we find in that other with his wide vision and great elegiac power. Says Tennyson,—

"My own dim life should teach me this,  
That life shall live for evermore,  
Else earth is darkness at the core,  
And dust and ashes all that is."

The poet's spring, his hopefulness, he largely owed to his philosophy of development, which, I need hardly say, so far from dispensing with

Deity, depends on Him as—immanent in nature and man—Cause of all unfoldings. The philosophic purport of "In Memoriam" centres in the Prologue, wherein he invokes that "Immortal Love," which is to him, Dante-wise, source and key of all things. We have seen Love—because there is none greater—to be the last word of Dante, and the final note of 'Faust'; it is also the accent of Tennyson. Not in forgetfulness of the creative genius and fastidious power of the "melancholy" Gray is it that I speak of the "In Memoriam" as a peerless elegy—"jacinth work of subtlest jewellery"—in whose most musical and deep-thoughted strains are lines and couplets which contain the highest essence and suggest the deepest truths of theistic and Christian philosophy. I set down the first instances that occur to me, and they will suffice:—

"Our wills are ours, we know not how,  
Our wills are ours, to make them Thine."

Again,—

"For merit lives from man to man,  
And not from man, O Lord, to Thee."

Or yet again,—

“Life shall live for evermore.”

Or this,—

“And finds ‘I am not what I see,  
And other than the things I touch.’”

Or this,—

“Oh, yet we trust that somehow good  
Will be the final goal of ill.”

Or yet again,—

“Who trusted God was love indeed,  
And love Creation’s final law.”

Or once more,—

“That God, which ever lives and loves,  
One God, one law, one element.”

We do not err when we regard it as thus, in fact, almost a kind of modern masterpiece of Divine philosophy. Not that he is peculiarly daring or venturesome in his speculative moods. There is, however, a fineness, a tentativeness, in his spiritual thought, which peculiarly befits the unexplored regions of the spiritual: there is not merely spiritual faith in him, but a finely speculative spirit on matters that may be justly made subjects of speculation; and there is certainly

speculative advance in his growing religious thought, which is pretty strongly theistic when not strikingly Christian. If he has chosen to speak of a "higher" pantheism, it has been of that innocuous type in which the mystic blending of God and the Universe has not been such as to obscure for him the personality either of the human subject or the Divine. There is a triad in "The Human Cry" which bespeaks no lack of constructive power in the poet's thought,—


" Infinite Ideality !  
 Immeasurable Reality !  
 Infinite Personality !"

His philosophy, idealistic in type, can be said to be no other than a compound of Hegelian and Kantian elements, mingled with influences proceeding from our own Coleridge and Wordsworth, to name no others. I claim that by a fine philosophic instinct the spirit of man was for him that which lay at the very root and basis of things. Such loss of self as was his in communion with "the Nameless" does not yet seem to have savoured of pantheistic absorption. Indeed, as true a theism, I venture to think,

may be claimed for Tennyson as Professor Veitch but lately claimed for Wordsworth. His theism has chosen to accentuate the truth of immanence, but it is still theism. Greater far was the honour of the later bard in that he was able to maintain, to the extent that he did, a clear theistic sky amid the darkling influences of a new and difficult time. He has not failed to affirm God as sustaining in His personality, and not as formless force or indeterminate energy, a relation to the Universe in which He is central and vital. In this connection, too, we may say,—

“Eternal form shall still divide  
The Eternal soul from all beside,  
And I shall know Him when we meet.”

Yes, there will still be personal distinctions and powers, and nothing that savours of approach to Buddhistic Nirvana. We come through the world unto God; for, if Dante has shown us that the way to God is a mystic stair, it is Tennyson who has so finely taught us that the great world is itself an *altar*, whose stairs that upward slope to God are surely climbed by him on whom have come the spirit and power of sacrifice. No cosmic mechanism is allowed by



our poet to exclude the supernatural from working in and towards man ; thus it is, for example, he can say in "Enoch Arden"—

"had not his poor heart  
Spoken with That, which being everywhere  
Lets none, who speaks with Him, seem all alone,  
Surely the man had died of solitude."

What an absence, however, of theological cast in this poet ! How different, to take a conspicuous example, from Milton, with his "theological epic," as E. Schérer styles it—a difference of the ages, not merely of the men ! This theological character of Milton's poetry, with its "stately and regal argument," one can fully recognise without sharing E. Schérer's unduly severe strictures on its theology in his artistically fine essay on the subject. I do not know that we have any reason to regret the difference : if we have grown less theological only to become more religious, the difference may mark a gain in charity, simplicity, and spiritual strength. Yet I hardly think it need imply detracting of Tennyson to apply in this respect the ancient word, —*Laus non est hominis sed temporum*. For myself, I am of those who would have welcomed

in the poet a more masculine tone of sentiment and a more austere style of intellect. Though his poetry be, as I have said, non-theological in form, the religious truths it voices run in too many instances parallel to the Maurician theology to leave the poet's theological affinities doubtful. The great truths voiced by Maurice—such truths as the Divine immanence in man and in nature, the living worth of the present in virtue of God's presence in the midst of us, the need of brotherly love, and of a future life—Tennyson took up and sang as only he could sing. Instead of trying to reason upwards to the Deity, Tennyson takes what to humankind must always seem the more excellent way, to "climb the Mount of Blessing"—the way of feeling after God if haply he may find Him Who is not far from every one of us. This is but to say that, in the absence of any subjection of feeling to critical analysis, it is our faith, our emotion, Tennyson stirs, rather than our logical faculty.

Obviously, this return to our primary spiritual beliefs cannot remain the final resting-place of Christian Philosophy. It can never be content to regard feeling as the end—no less than the

beginning—of religion. It cannot be content always to dwell in dust—to abide in a “faith” that cannot “know”—but must lay claim to fact and method sure and scientific as those of any science known. For, as I have had occasion to say, in my work on ‘The Progressiveness of Modern Christian Thought,’ —“The reconciliation of modern knowledge and faith, of science and religion, of natural civilisation and Christianity, will be fully compassed only as all the external facts furnished by nature, revelation, and history, are reduced to living unity in the inmost consciousness of Christianised man.” And even as to what was said a moment ago about his appeal to feeling, I am inclined to think that, although the “sunset of life gave him mystical lore,” there is yet—with all deference to Kingsley, who accounts him more mystical than Wordsworth—less of the truly mystic spirit in Tennyson than could be wished in a religious poet. No floods of subjective and transcendental mysticism can really be said to carry this poet’s soul in onward sweep: his capacious philosophy is, no doubt, spiritual, for he is spiritual translator of the soul within



as truly as Wordsworth was of nature without ; but the soul of Tennyson abides too balanced and masterful in its reserved power, and is too sensitive to the questionings of his age, to be at any time impetuously swept along — like Shelley or Byron or that great German lyricist Heine—on currents of self-exaggeration, or, as it has been put, “unrestrained self-boding.” If Tennyson was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, no more was he unresponsive to the human. What, I ask, could surpass in tender humanness his exquisite lyric,—“Break, break, break”? Nothing, indeed, unless it be his own passage, “The Severn to the Danube gave,” in the “In Memoriam.” He sought to be true in his humanness to what is “likest God within the soul.” Just because he was a poet, and not the framer of a theological system, dogmatic tests must not be applied to his work. For it was no aim of his “enchanted reverie” to fix the truths he sang in intellectual shapes or forms, or take them out of the infinite realms of faith and love.

Just because my readers are reasonable beings, they will not expect me, within compass of a

single brief essay, to set forth the whole system—if such a term be permissible here—of one the prismatic hues of whose philosophical thought are all expressive of wide human sympathies and fidelity to the natural conditions of things. I am content to set forth tracks that lead to the poet's "empyrean heights of thought." This fidelity of which I have just spoken is none the less true that he rises, from midst of the despair of scientific negation, to "Comfort clasped in truth revealed." More—if it came to that—might be said for most of his theologic teachings than religious critics of the straiter sort have possibly imagined: while I am not disposed to regard him as always free from trace of theological superficialism, I am at present simply concerned to recall how subjective, how intuitive, is his faith, how profoundly religious is his feeling, and how Christianised is his emotionalism. I do not wish it to be thought from this, however, that I hold the underlying thought—so deep and broad—of his poetry to be other than mainly objective. There was about him a largeness of mind, a catholicity of temperament—*desiderium orbis catholici*—which kept it from being otherwise. May it not be

said that such doubt—due to widowed affection  
—as may be thought to have found expression in  
the verse of him to whom none may

“sit as God holding no form of creed,  
But contemplating all,”

is of that sort sometimes found in poets in which  
there is yet more religion than in their faith?  
From every fluctuation in its faith-states the  
soul emerges to sing,—

“I held it truth, with him who sings  
To one clear harp in divers tones,  
That men may rise on stepping-stones  
Of their dead selves to higher things.”

May we not, then, say that his is “the sunnier  
side of doubt,” and hence doubt with a difference  
from, say, the sceptical feeling of doubt and the  
sad sense of unreality that may be found per-  
vading poems of that fine, original, and buoyant  
spirit, Arthur Hugh Clough? It is the poet of  
“In Memoriam” who has said,—

“I found Him not in world or sun,  
Or eagle’s wing, or insect’s eye;  
Nor through the questions men may try,  
The petty cobwebs we have spun.”

No, not by the way of the understanding, nor

by the paths of nature, did he find God, but as He is revealed to man's inner spirit. He knew no exemption from Mephistophelean elements or influences, that would wholly turn him from the sphere and quest of the good.

"I heard a voice 'believe no more,'  
And heard an ever-breaking shore  
That tumbled in the Godless deep."

He knew what it was to sit "within a helmless bark," paralysed by doubt, and menaced by a meaningless universe. It is he who, when the "freezing reason" brought him deep questionings of God and things Divine, has been able to tell how, in face of this "spectral doubt,"—

"like a man in wrath the heart  
Stood up and answered, 'I have felt.'"

He it is, too, who, in this triumph of faith and emotion over mere reason and intellect, has said,—

"Then was I as a child that cries,  
But, crying, knows his father near."

We may surely say that there is nothing so Christian in a poet as this felt yet nameless need—a need which may even abhor doctrinal definition—of being Christian, this warring

against sensual paganism and a vain and proud philosophy, this clinging to "faith beyond the forms of faith," this faith, in fact, which in Tennyson we see rise, phoenix-like, out of the very ashes of doubt, and mount upwards towards the illimitable sky.

"He fought his doubts and gather'd strength,  
He would not make his judgment blind,  
He faced the spectres of the mind  
And laid them : thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own."

Now, it is, no doubt, a highly satisfactory issue that the poet's doubts were dispelled, in the way he tells, and faith in God, Freedom, and Immortality restored to him. It is a significant thing that he finds a place for ecstasy, which, in respect of the truths that never can be proved, is higher than any faculty of knowing. Yet, with all this, I cannot but account it a defect that what certitude he has achieved has not been reached more by appeal to reason, which no emotion may evict. I come back, however, from this passing plea for the reason to observe that I am certainly not meaning to say either that the sacredness of sorrow—the sorrow of a blasted

world of affection—is a thing to be proved by reasoning, or that there are not sensibilities of the soul that lie deeper than our active processes of thought. No ; what I am saying is that the highest result and final certainty are to be reached by no abdication or suppression of reason, but by so fearless a faith in reason as shall raise us into a faith of reason. In our poet's case there is no cold, Niobe-like stiffening of the soul through grief. No ; the Divine element is too present in consolatory influence for that, and, just because this is so, no sweeter word steals on the ear of any human soul, that may be called to pass through pangs of sorrow deep as the poet's own, than the confiding couplet,—

“I trust he lives in Thee, and there  
I find him worthier to be loved.”

The lessons of the sore inward grief with which the poet was smitten—the sorrow which, as said Dante, “re-marries us to God”—had been so inwrought into his inmost consciousness as to colour his poetry until it became

“The story of a heart at strife  
That learned, at last, to kiss the rod,  
And passed through sorrow up to God,  
From living to a higher life.”

What Beatrice did so long ago for Dante in leading up his love to God, what Margaret later did for her redeemed lover Faust, that in some sort Tennyson's Arthur—"mix'd with God and Nature"—does for the cultured man of our time; he becomes, in fact, a spiritual form for the Divine. No small merit is it in Tennyson that he has ennobled, glorified, sublimated love by passing out of the sphere of profound personal love into a larger, more universal, region of love to God and man and Nature itself. If life is, with the mighty-souled Browning, aspiration rather than attainment, so is the ascent from selfish aim and low-thoughted care—"from living to a higher life"—the ideal of the many-sided Tennyson, with his more chastened, more finely balanced optimism. Hence he has so worthily sung the reality of virtue, the worth of man's life, the significance of suffering, the duty of submission, the unbounded satisfaction of trust, the goodness of God, the problems of human responsibility and the hereafter. If not all, he has yet given us most of the highest philosophy known to the human heart—love, grief, life, death, faith, doubt, hope, aspiration, immortality,

with the limitations of the finite mind in its strivings after—and mystic union with—the Infinite. He makes man's salvation depend on his making his own will God's, and so linking himself to the Universal, which abideth for ever. And for mankind in whole he is not—before "In Memoriam" is done—without a philosophy of history, in which he partly sees how all things are "coöperant"—as in some work of art—to a single end.

If, as the late Principal Shairp once expressed it, "he has not exactly imported new truths into his age," he has yet "so well expressed much of the highest thought that was dawning on men's consciousness that he has become, in some sort, the first unveiler of it." If he has not found as worthy place in his poetry as could be wished for repentance—I mean in a large and deep sense—that is its loss and ours. His spiritual philosophy might, I think, have ploughed deeper, even though I by no means fail in appreciation of such remorse and quivering repentance as he has given us in "Guinevere." I cannot think he has maintained sufficiently firm standing-ground for a perfectly satisfactory philosophy of human



life and character in the way he has made certain of his efforts to educe from evolutionary thought both explanation and consolation in respect of man's moral lapses and spiritual falls. An extremely difficult subject, no doubt, but one, as I believe, which not even a great poet can deal with satisfactorily without, while doing justice by cosmic issues, probing deeply the experience and the claims of the individual—for which an abiding worth is to be maintained—and remaining severely true to the spiritual consciousness of Christendom.

We cannot afford to miss the deep present worth and significance—of course, I do not mean that the poet never recognises them—of the fact expressed in the prologue in Heaven of 'Faust,' that—with the requisite stress on the *individual*,—

"A good man, in the direful grasp of ill,  
His consciousness of right retaineth still."

—Miss Swanwick.

*Ein guter Mensch in seinem dunkeln Drange  
Ist sich des rechten Weges wohl bewusst.*

We must learn such justice to the present that, as it has been expressed, we shall seek,—

“For *present* good in life’s familiar face,  
And build thereon our hopes of good *to come*.”

But I have certainly no thought to judge the poet hardly because he did not wholly escape the confusion of his time, for it will be strange if we ourselves be not, in some sort, sharers with him of the confusions of the present. It may indeed be that his spiritual philosophy shall outlive the present confusion. But on that I shall not now speculate. He is, in any case, the “sweet historian of the heart,” and has mirrored forth in his most musical verse the things of faith so that they call forth their appropriate emotions in every human breast. If he has not the strength seraphic which he himself so generously ascribes to Milton, if to him has not been given the intellectual subtlety of Shelley, or if he has not known the depth and grandeur of Wordsworth at his mightiest, he has been the most purely poetic genius of his own—and that no mean—time; one, too, whose splendid witness-bearing to the spiritual, the theistic, and the Divine has been seen in the magnificent help he has afforded in expressing the largeness of our faith, and the

wonders of the world—the “Renaissance of Wonder”—in the new light of Christ.

No doubt, it is still lawful for any one to wish that he had, as one sent, in Byron’s phrase, “to be Christ’s Laureate,” spoken more explicitly of this sacred Name—“the one great word well worth all languages in earth or heaven”—as the Image of the Invisible God and the Solver of our perplexity. But possibly he has done better by the poet’s function. At least he has done nobly in calling Him “the Life indeed,” and in recalling men to that which they have been so slow to learn since—no less than before—the day that Augustine wrote in his ‘Confessions,’—*I sought Thee abroad in Thy works, and behold, Thou wast within me.* [“Et ecce intus eras, et ego foris, et ibi te quærebam.”—Conf., Lib. X. cap. 27.]

Passing to what is outward, we are not, of course, able to miss evolution—“ever climbing after some ideal good”—as oftentimes in the speculative region his dominant note; but we *are* able to escape the procedure of those who come to his poetry to find the theory of evolution in a couplet, even while we may admire

the rare power and deft skill with which he has turned scientific material to high poetic use. We are able, too, to see how clearly his evolution is of the modal—not causal—sort ; how his lofty idealism takes God at once for root of being, and roof and crown of things. Indeed, in his fine imaginative poem, "By an Evolutionist," we see, notwithstanding its questionable opening, what God has done for the poet—and will do for every one who is willing so to live—in bringing him to spiritual "heights" of life, whereon no sound of man's lower nature is heard—"heights," too, that are not final.

By Tennyson, just because he is a poet true, science is always felt as tributary to man and the human. No materialistic science is for him allowed to place the results of natural selection, or indeed of any physical causes, in any position where the immanence of Deity shall be superseded. No ; he had drunk too deeply of the spirit of Hegel and Goethe, of Carlyle and Wordsworth, for that. The "myriad world" is for him the "shadow" of that God Who is "closer" than "breathing" and "nearer than hands and feet." As to the far-reaching importance of

such new, unwonted stress on immanence, I cannot do better than quote what I have elsewhere—in a work already referred to—said of the religious thought of the coming time in this connection.

“No more will He be to us the far-off Deity of Deism, but the immanent God alike of Scripture and of Science, the secret Force of creation, the eternal Energy of the universe. But, while the theology of the future will continue, with the theology of the present, to recognise God as the immanent principle of all, it will seek to correct the exaggerated tendencies of those who do not now see how deeply the doctrine of the Divine immanence is grounded in that of the Divine transcendence, and will endeavour to make its doctrine satisfying and complete in both directions. It will better perceive that, though we are happily not called to choose between the two, the Divine transcendence is the more essential truth—without which the Christian religion would not remain—though it is on the Divine immanence the needs of our times have called for stress. It will exhibit the thing of prime moment to be not

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the merely physical aspect of nearness which immanence implies, but the moral nearness which is pledged to us in the fact of personality, however transcendent."

In this connection I ought, perhaps, to express dissatisfaction that the poet, speaking of God in Aristotelian strain as Life, Law, Element, and End, regards his Deity as one "*which*" ever lives and loves, eviscerating, in the pious interest, the Divine Personality of all real content. If the concept of life or personality is feeble and cold compared with the Divine Energy, is it very rational to suppose that we shall come nearer to any intenser conceptions of it by turning our gaze away from those manifestations of *living* and of *loving*, on the part of personality, in which the most glowing spiritual energies are seen? Our poet is superior to Aristotelian teaching in respect of his emphasis on love in the energy of Deity; to him in the great teleological movement of the world love is the clue that guides: could he not have transcended all pious timidity, and bravely given us a God *Who* is full-voiced and Eternal Personality? In this, as we shall see in our next essay, his

religious philosophy is in substantial accord with that of Emerson. It is, on the other hand, not to be overlooked how finely he had addressed himself just before to that *living will* which is of the essence of personality.

I come back to say that science does not trouble itself with ideals,—cares only for results of direct and material sort; but it is otherwise with poetry. What we are apt to feel in science is, as Goethe said, that—*unführend ist die Natur*—“no feeling has nature.” There were in his poetic art impersonal ideals to which Tennyson was able to subordinate all individualisms, influenced though he so plainly was by scientific environment. “The poet’s sympathy with science,” says Professor Dowden, “is ardent in an age when science reaches forth her arms to feel from world to world; and yet once or twice his spirit is vexed by doubts as to the possibility of reconciling scientific observations with his spiritual faiths and hopes.” No scientific agnostic, however, was he: his was but the spiritual agnosticism which might have taken for itself the favourite text of the modern “Father of Church History”—Neander—*Unser Wissen is*

*Stückwerk*—"We know in part." True as it is that the poet of "In Memoriam" might have left us less in the shape of minute reflectiveness and polished artificiality—as Victor Hugo has, for example, more naturally done—and more in the way of undisguised emotion and vital experience, we yet cannot but be thankful that he is, as Poe phrased it, "most ethereal"—has, in fact, in the spirit of Keats, shown us—and that with a noble fidelity—so much truth in beauty, so much beauty in truth. Could he, with his Dantesque love of allegory and symbolism, but have seen more of that Divine beauty, which is the beauty of holiness, how much better still had he sung that Love Divine which it was his faithful joy to exalt!

But as it is, what an almost ideally ethical quality of spirit and thought was his, and this without trace of moral austerity! No small result, if in poetry, as said Goethe, "only the really great and pure advances us." Interior experience of a profound sort—and he leaves no lack of luminous comment on the same—underlies his poetic impulses: inspirational under all spiritual potencies remains the poetry which,



from the deeps of an exalted suffering, he pours forth in the slowly growing strains that meet us. From the many facets of his poetry—"like sparkles in the stone avanturine"—flash forth rays of the pure white light of Christian truth, which reveal the triumph of the clean in heart. What grand spiritual reconcilements are presupposed in "Enoch Arden" "where God-in-man is one with man-in-God," and in "The Coming of Arthur"—the rather impersonal Arthur—where "man's word is God in man"! "Perplext in faith" man may be, but he must still be "pure in deed," although our poet sees that purity of deed must wedded be to perfect faith for perfect victory. Even when, as in the "Idylls of the King," we dwell under shadow of romance ærial and soft, we are not long allowed by him who would "break the heathen and uphold the Christ" to forget the King within the human breast, and the warfare of sense with soul.

"I have lived my life, and that which I have done  
May He within Himself make pure!"

Thus speaks the individual, whose work can-

not yet die. Whether or not the poet has allowed a Manicheist tendency to colour his conception of evil, certain it is that he felt the sufficiency of a truly ethical will for making the soul decisive victor. He felt what moments of high ethical and spiritual impulse there are for man who

“feels he cannot die,  
And knows himself no vision to himself,  
Nor the high God a vision.”

Yes, for deeper than all ethical impulse or foundation in Tennyson is the relation—the personal relation—in which man is knit in love to the eternal. What attractions the Goethean view of evil—which we have already seen in dealing with ‘Faust’—as only a passing phenomenon, and not eternal or ultimate, had for Tennyson, the “In Memoriam” plainly shows. What hold it had on him was begotten of faith—was due to undefined and imperious conviction rather than to knowledge—and sublimed in hope. What large—even if not sufficiently luminous—faith in the future, and what confidence in progress for mankind—even if his sympathy with their sufferings seems not always sufficiently

real—we see him in “Locksley Hall” nourish in the very face of doubt! So much we may grant, though we miss the fire of indignation, and the rush of impulsive love and pity, we have been wont to expect, before the world’s hindrances and wrongs, in great poets. Always young he could not *be*, but he seems to *feel* so young as to remind one—say—of the spirit of a Schleiermacher. There cannot be a doubt that, if Browning’s notion of progress sprang from the inward aspirations and anticipations of the soul, Tennyson’s conception of progress sought its support more in the outer world, with its visions of cosmic and unchangeable law. Such law he accepts because he trusts too little to man as man, and is almost too well content to wait the growth—with its resultant advancement—which is carried on under the conditions of law. But amid the visions of the triumphs of science, as amid the dreams of a great political future, he never lost hold of the truth that life can be perfected only by ethical love. The gradual conquest of self is, with this great teacher of Duty, a sign of man’s progressive advance: there is little of rapture with him, no doubt,

but he leads us to altitudes where at least a grave and tempered felicity may be enjoyed. In all this it will be seen how near of kin his philosophy here is to that of George Eliot. To the moral isolation of the cultured soul, "exiled from eternal God," ethical testimony is borne in the "Palace of Art." By this un comforted soul a place for repentance at length is found,—

"‘ Make me a cottage in the vale,’ she said,  
‘ Where I may mourn and pray.’"

So we come to see that soul itself redeemed to the simple humanities of the life that now should be.

"Perchance I may return with others there  
When I have purged my guilt."

In certain other of his poems, the wretchedness of the self-centred life, and the power and happiness of true joy, form chief parts of his philosophy of life. In that strictly philosophical poem, "The Two Voices," we are shown, in truly rich and glowing poetry, how we may, in the fight with "crazy sorrow" and sullen despair—in which we have "ceased and sat as

one forlorn"—come forth as more than conquerors. This is

"To feel, although no tongue can prove,  
That every cloud, that spreads above  
And veileth love, itself is love."

The wretched result, on the other hand, of his case in whom sensual enjoyments kill the hope in progress for humanity under God, and deaden, while they cannot destroy, the sense of purpose in human life, is portrayed in "The Vision of Sin,"—

"Fill the can, and fill the cup :  
All the windy ways of men  
Are but dust that rises up,  
And is lightly laid again."

There are no deeper themes than those dealt with in such poems: I will go so far at least as to say that in them our poet struck a note which only he could strike who had felt the riddle of the world and the enigma of this life, and from whose gaze the darker, sadder aspects of existence were never quite shut out. The real and mysterious problems of life, of mind, and of belief are powerfully dealt with also in such pieces as "Despair," "De Profundis," and

the majestic poem "Vastness," the ultimate victory of faith being that which, after many terrors and tumults of the spirit, we see. Of these, the stately poem "De Profundis" is marked by a finely speculative trend of thought, touching on man's wondrous power over his "own act and on the world." As for the life beyond, how bravely does his little poem, "Wages," teach an immortality of "Virtue" rather than of such reward as may be found in resting in a "golden grove" or basking in a "summer sky"—an immortality of progress rather than of simple joy. Not less clear or less sweet are the accents with which he elsewhere, in his protest against all crass materialism and ethics of the dust, sings of God and immortality.

The attitude of his mind towards immortality is liker that of the inspiring philosopher Fichte than anything else I can think of. Like the philosopher of *the blessed life*—"colossal, adamantine spirit"—was Tennyson in the vivid, living way he set forth the resistless rushing of the mind towards—the persistent hold of the human consciousness on—the thought that it "was not

made to die." Yes ; and it is on this very theme of immortality that our poet plants firmest feet of faith, so dear to him is thought of immortal life, immortal union, and immortal development. With what fighting and what fervour he set forth the faith in immortal life until, in calmest confidence, he "crost the bar"! So did he, too, because all life is being wrought into union with the Perfect Mind—the Divine Father of men. What a mocking life has been given us—a veritable "murmur of gnats in the gloom"—if it be not so that love is immortal! As "Vastness" has it—though not with all the calm steadfastness that might be wished,—

"What is it all, if we all of us end but in being our own  
corpse-coffins at last,  
Swallow'd in Vastness, lost in Silence, drown'd in the  
depths of a meaningless Past?"

But, like Southey, who felt that "they sin who tell us love can die," our poet felt the indestructibleness of love, felt what love would become if unglorified by the feeling of immortality, and reasoned that, because he had loved, "the dead are not dead but alive."

I hope to be forgiven for closing this essay

in a somewhat audacious manner by inserting some lines written to give utterance to my feeling on the poet's funeral day, for, if they belong to a form of verse—the sonnet—which this great poet, unlike Milton, Wordsworth, Shakespeare, employed but little—and with none too great success for one who was such a master of form—they are given for no poetic power of mine, but only as expressive of my admiration for so lofty a poet, idealist, and philosopher:—

Dear bard, beside whose bier a nation weeps,  
 Thy soul, far-sighted, hath its last look ta'en  
 Of that world-future which so long hath lain  
 As land descried by one who keen watch keeps.  
 If poet's barque have moved in greater deeps,  
 None with a defter grace e'er dipped the main,  
 Or bore such freight of hope for hearts in pain,—  
 All hail its broad and universal sweeps !  
 Sweet was thy " Life shall live for evermore "—  
 More than thy note nor priest nor poet knows,  
 None,—optimist so wise,—the light now shows ;  
 None felt as now all thou to men hast been.  
 Speak once again the word our souls implore,  
 Then let thy laurel ever grow more green.





# EMERSON AS A THINKER

Vivre, c'est penser et sentir son âme."—Joubert.

"For nothing worthy proving can be proven,  
Nor yet disproven."

—TENNYSON'S *Ancient Sage*.

"The end of Philosophy is Truth ; not in one region, but in all ; Truth apprehended, if it may be, in its highest unity."—BISHOP WESTCOTT'S *Religious Thought in the West*.

"The simple intuition of being shows itself to be the necessary condition of knowing."—ROSMINI'S *Philosophy*.

"Plotinus certainly approaches to the intuitive point of view."

"That of which Plotinus becomes conscious in his ecstasy is, however, philosophic thought, speculative Notions and Ideas."—HEGEL'S *History of Philosophy*.

"Unlock'd the spirit-world doth lie ;  
Thy sense is shut, thy heart is dead !  
Up, scholar, lave, with courage high,  
Thine earthly breast in the morning red !"

—MISS SWANWICK'S *Faust*.

"We beseech the Father of Lights, if He is the God of infinite charity we proclaim Him to be, to tell us whether all our thoughts of Freedom and Truth have proceeded from the Father of Lies ; whether for eighteen centuries we have been propagating a mockery when we have said that there is a Son of God, Who is Truth, and Who can make us free indeed."—MAURICE'S *Theological Essays*.

## EMERSON AS A THINKER.

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HARDLY any thinker of the nineteenth century is more worthy of study—whether one agrees with his thought or not—than this *Representative Man* who, from a lone pinnacle of thought, gives forth his views on Man and the World. He is the hero, we may say, of American “transcendentalism,” to whose shrine men throng—so potent the spell of his thought—“as the heaped waves of the Atlantic follow the moon.” Yes, one who is too intensely modern to suffer the past to tyrannise over the present. His philosophy we are left to find out from among his mosaics for ourselves, but it is as certainly within finding out as it is worth finding out. His philosophy has the rare merit

of trying to meet the needs of actual life. He is not only profound in thought, but also cosmopolitan in range of mental sympathy and mode of treatment. There is no need to be unduly staggered by such extravagances as his sweeping dogmatic generalisation that "Plato is philosophy and philosophy Plato." Emerson always takes sides with the Platonist, though he can make Plato give place to Plotinus when it suits him. To him mind, with all its abstractions, is infinitely more than matter, and the singleness of reason more than the multiplicity of sense. But his Platonising professions need not stagger us. After all, Plato's philosophy had already made its own what all philosophy worthy the name has sought to annex—namely, the realm of the unknown, broadening, strange to say, with every advance of knowledge. After all, philosophy is only the love of wisdom, and what deeper, what more adventurous love of wisdom has the world seen than that of Plato? It was of Plato that Goethe said,—“His tendency is always upward, possessed constantly with a longing to return to his divine home. Every word that he utters has reference to a totality of the good,

the beautiful, and the true, the growth of which in every human breast it is his high object to promote." To me it seems very natural that the "saving purpose," or salvation which comes of thought and its endeavour, should have proved so attractive to the Emersonian mind. Rightly enough, Emerson had found in Plato the father of idealism, the first philosopher systematically to set forth—and for all time—the thought or reason that rules all things. If Emerson felt this debt we owe to Plato so deeply as to fail of realising how far the final steps of philosophical progress yet were from having been taken, his failure may be allowed to lean to virtue's side.

The pinnacle on which the lone sage of Concord has placed himself is one from which the unity of all things in Law may be clearly seen. "The Laws are his consolers." With him "Conscious Law is King of Kings." "Any distrust of the permanence of laws would paralyse the faculties of man." "They animate him with the leading of great duty, and an endless horizon." They seem to lead him up to a Lawgiver. The diverse phenomena of the world are thus

reduced to unity. In his "Address to Divinity Students" he says, in reference to this unity of all things,—“All things proceed out of the same spirit, and all things conspire with it.” I need hardly point out how he elsewhere approximates to Kant in viewing philosophy as having the task to find a ground absolute and unconditioned for all conditional existence. What our thinker cares for is to view these phenomena in their inward or spiritual affinities. He is, strictly taken, no psychologist; logician he is not—nor metaphysician either—but spiritualist and Platonic idealist, an intuitive thinker—let it be granted even when critics have spoken—of profound type. If our admiration of him as prophet and thinker must find a place for reserves, it will only be like his own. The triumph of the logicians over him is, as Harriet Martineau said, “of no avail; he conquers minds as well as hearts.” Minds *more than* hearts, I should say: what he cares for is to make men think. Not mere thinkers, but *man thinking*, we clearly see to be his special aim, and his seminative influence on the minds of men has certainly been great. His masculine mind sweeps all before it,



so strong is the underlying current of scepticism in this original philosopher and fascinating personality. His scepticism, however, is of the kind that lives through and passes beyond its doubt and hears the spirit of the Universe saying, as in his mystical poem "Brahma,"—

"They reckon ill who leave me out ;  
When me they fly, I am the wings ;  
I am the doubter and the doubt."

Marvellous, too, is his mysticism : in "Wood-notes" he speaks of God as

"the Eternal Pan  
Who layeth the world's incessant plan,"

and later in the same poem says that


"He is the axis of the star ;  
He is the sparkle of the spar ;  
He is the heart of every creature."

In fact, his eclecticism is of obtrusively catholic character, so that he can mix up, in the bundle of mysticism, Paul and Plotinus and Pascal and Porphyry, Socrates and Swedenborg, Quaker and Quietist, and make them all his own. No sooner does he treat of life's highest ends than his mystical idealism comes into view as crowning all.



His star-bespangled pages, where *nebulæ* hardly ever appear, were a creation called forth in the sweat of his brain. No small tribute is it to his literary power that he has made Tyndall and Ruskin his debtors—among others easy to name—despite the smallness, as it must be said, of his constructive power. His scrappy method and jerky, antithetical style have not robbed him of the saving virtues of clearness and terseness and decision. With him, in the essay on "Circles," "the key to every man is his thought."

The key to Emerson is that view-point from which we see, amid his intellectually mystical tendencies, the rising lines of Law blend into unity—the Divine Unity. "The day of days," says the voice of his poetical philosophy, "the great day of the feast of life, is that in which the inward eye opens to the unity in things." Our thinker is, philosophically, no materialist, but, as I have tried to show, an idealist—and, we allow, an "eminently sane" one, too—to whom man is, in fact, the measure of all things. "Every materialist," he says, "will be an idealist, but an idealist can never go backward to be a materialist." Great is the merit of Emerson's ideal-



ism before the base-born materialism of our time. He quotes the logical expounders of materialism as themselves constrained to say,—“Though we should soar into the heavens, though we should sink into the abyss, we never go out of ourselves ; it is always our own thought that we perceive.”

In treating of “Idealism,” he says of “that appearance which we call the world,” that it “always is phenomenal.” So does Idealism see “the world in God.” It is for the “perception of differences” that space and time exist: says Emerson in “Discipline,” “Therefore is space, and therefore time, that man may know that things are not huddled and lumped, but sun-dered and individual.” And again, “Time and space relations vanish as laws are known.” To our mystical thinker “the fields of space” may be said to be “threaded by magnetic influences,” and the stars may be said, in true Swedenborgian fashion, to “chime to the chords of music.” A prince among pure intuitionists he has been, trusting to no slow methods of inductive reasoning, but to man’s natural intuitions for his exalted vision of the Eternal. Freed from extravagances, his brave claim for intuition meant really

a fresh and healthful assertion of spiritual independence. I, for my part, grant much to the power of intuition, but I should almost as soon expect the sea to blossom into beds of roses as expect pure and simple intuition to yield a God so complete as the incomplete Deity of Emerson. His Apotheosis of Intuition is such that prayer is to be seen in all action as soon as man is one with God, and the dualism in nature and consciousness presupposed in prayer is to cease. Who worships God will, with him, become God. If he yet felt this intuitional sufficiency rather a troublous matter to explain in a satisfactory way, his intellectual uneasiness is intelligible. In which respect he reminds one most readily, I think, of the like imperfect understanding of the nature and scope of intuitive knowledge that forms a feature of Spinoza. Christian conception could, I venture to suggest, have done more for him here than he knew.

As to the Pantheistic colour of his thought, under which, it is alleged, man's life became to him but a passing phase of the All-Life, I have no wish but to escape doing our thinker injustice. He has not been very just to himself, however,

if so be he had any wish that his philosophical creed be not thought pantheistic, nor his practice deemed a prayerless Pantheism. His tendency is towards Pantheism of a subjective type. No doubt, he speaks in "Self-Reliance" of God as "the ever-blessed One," and of "self-existence" as "the attribute of the Supreme Cause," but his God is rather ill-defined—to put it mildly—in respect of nature, from which He by no means stands out sufficiently clear. The philosophy which I hold regards it as very manifest that, to quote words I have elsewhere used, "the primal Being which we call God must remain to us a sealed Book unless we are willing to read by the light which the category of personality affords. The personality of God may be no prime concern, either to the documents of Christianity or to the unsophisticated Christian consciousness, but it is clearly seen, we believe, to be of vital moment for the religious life in the view of reflective thought." This is more than a dim spirit in nature, or a tendency in the Universe. To him "spirit creates," and God is the "Universal Spirit"—that "Over-soul" which is the immanent reason and will. His "essence


refuses to be recorded in propositions." Of course, I greatly admire the beauty of the passages—in Cabot's excellent Memoir—in which Emerson cannot think of God as personal for fear of profanation—of making Him "an individual." I am quite at one with him as to the inadequacy of language here, but if personality is "too little," let us yet not be betrayed into deeming it unessential—into excluding it from the more he fain would postulate. Of course, no one makes God *an* individual in any sense that would keep Him from being—if we might so say—*the* individual—the Infinite and All-embracing Personality. And no one thinks, in making Him Infinite Personality, of making His Personality a simple transcript of our own, or of withholding from Him, as the Absolute Personality, powers, qualities, attributes which transcend anything we possess.

What does Emerson here do but, in fact, confound personality—treating it as essentially finite—with individuality, which latter is, of course, an essentially finite thing? True, metaphysic might not be a strong point with Emerson, as Cabot apologetically suggests, but need

we carry our piety so far as to be feelingly afraid of ascribing personality to Deity in any sense that has any meaning or significance for us? Has such piety no risks of even needlessly rejecting the known in order to feed a superstitious veneration of the unknown? Cabot innocently thinks Emerson's denial of personality to God was "only an affirmation of the infinitude of His nature," showing thereby what a rather small place self-determining will and purpose must have in Cabot's own conception of personality. It will never content us to believe in the word God, or in His supposed existence, and to stop short of believing in His personality, or treat personality in Him as simply identical with self-consciousness. Emerson hardly seems to have realised how far such individuality as he exemplified in himself—offspring of freedom, not of necessity—went to refute pantheistic theory or tendency. Else he would not have seemed so ready as he sometimes appears to throw aside his personality as a man casts his garments. Mr Moncure D. Conway, in his interesting work on Emerson, says that his "brave" word was—"Our theism is the purification of the human

mind," and I grant its bravery. What I doubt is the philosophic wisdom which finds not the purifying of the mind lead to recognition of a Deity other than One who has become simply subjective. Some of us would still have to do with actual and objective Deity: some of us still believe life's chief worth for man to be imparted by its having communion with such a Deity for its end. No "feeling of the Infinite," which we may subjectively own, can very well hear us, help us, save us.

In his poem, "The Adirondacs," he apostrophises the world; then adds the reflection,—  
"So like the soul of me, what if 'twere me?"  
I do not, of course, object to any one feeling—as we must all do—that, sprung from the bosom of the Infinite, we must return thither. But we have no right to lose the sense of our own personality, and its eternal significance and worth, or to bear about so feeble a sense as Emerson at times evinces of our own individuality and personal identity. We ought to feel, as De Tocqueville said, that the Almighty does not generalise in this vague, shadowy way, but to Him one ever counts for one. Of course, I




should philosophically ascribe to finite existence a universal side or aspect, but we have no right to allow a pantheistic sense of the All to sweep us away as with a flood, in which is lost all reckoning of the *mere* individual. Life must remain substantive and personal in order to satisfy us in our deepest conceptions. Spiritual leverage I take to be his lack, but where can he or we find that, short of full and satisfying personal relations to a personal Deity? Certainly his Christ is not the Christ of the Christian world—with its “noxious exaggeration” of His Person, as he would have it—even though he undoubtedly invests Jesus with a character that is unique, speaking of “the unique impression of Jesus upon mankind,” and saying that His “name is not so much written as ploughed into the history of the world.”

Now, I think it only too likely that there was some real need for “the new protest against Protestantism,” because justice had not been done by the Churches, in teachings about the Incarnation, to the eternal indwelling of God in man. If historic Christianity has not, however, given mankind its due for the sake of



the laudation of Christianity, there was no need for Emerson to rush to an opposite pole. If Christianity seemed to him to exaggerate the personal, there was no need for him—had his gravely curious indictment been true—to rush into the full embrace of the impersonal. There is an insulation—as he should have seen—of the Christ which, so far from isolating Him from us, first makes Him truly near and helpful. Distinctly I say that from His redemptive significance measureless inspiration to men first freely flows. Not to the sage of Concord need one go for a satisfactory study of the Son of man, Who is apt to be to him no more than some others he could name—yes, even though he admits that “Jesus always speaks from within, and in a degree that transcends all others.” When Emerson so little perceived the true significance of the Person of Christ, we need not wonder that miracles are to him a “profanation of the soul.” Nature — with the “inevitable dualism” which “bisects” it—he saw with a poet’s eye,—for poet he *was*, yea, and more than a poet. Nature was to him no more than a symbol, and the world we see was but a fleeting



show, so great was his sense of this universal symbolism. In "Woodnotes" he sings how the process of "rushing metamorphosis" in Nature

"Melts things that be to things that seem,  
And solid nature to a dream."

Matthew Arnold does not think Emerson has the simplicity, sensuousness, and passion to be looked for in a great poet, and I think we must allow that he severely tests us by his constant coldness and abstractness, his lack of completeness, and of warm human qualities. Yet the ecstatic mood was not wanting to Emerson, or he would never have become a "transparent eyeball" in his essay, or rather prose poem, on "Nature." Nor would he, but for such exaltation of spirit, have given us the vivid, imaginative shocks of his poem "Uriel." "Romance and reality" alike met Emerson in Nature, wherein he loved to nestle. The like transcendental elevation meets us in his strange poem "The Sphinx," where of man at his loftiest he sings—

"The heavens that now draw him  
With sweetness untold,  
Once found,—for new heavens  
He spurneth the old."

Even in such an essay as "The Over-Soul" I think the same spiritual enthusiasm must be allowed to be clearly present, as the soul feels itself so "alone, original, and pure." And if we have in Emerson no Beatrice as in Dante, nor Margaret function as in 'Faust,' nor Arthur as in Tennyson, yet I think we should come short if we did not specifically note some sort of parallel to all these in what Emerson touchingly says of his friend in the poem "Friendship"—

"Through thee alone the sky is arched,  
Through thee the rose is red ;  
All things through thee take nobler form,  
And look beyond the earth,  
The mill-round of our fate appears  
A sun-path in thy worth."

Philosophically, nature is to him not a "substance," but a "phenomenon": it is an "accident" and an "effect," whereas he ascribes to spirit "necessary existence." Emerson's views of nature are such as to show prophetic anticipations—visions of ascent—on his part of evolutionary discoveries that were still to come. In his "Woodnotes" he acknowledges the Divine

Order or Supreme Intelligence behind all nature-movements—

“ Once slept the world an egg of stone,  
And pulse, and sound, and light was none ;  
And God said, ‘Throb !’ and there was motion,  
And the vast mass became vast ocean.”

When idealism has dealt in these ways with matter, says Emerson in “Spirit,” it still “leaves God out of me,” and fails to “satisfy the demands of the spirit.” But, “out of the recesses of consciousness” comes the knowledge that through and behind nature “spirit is present,” and acts upon us “spiritually”—through ourselves. “The immobility or bruteness of Nature is the absence of spirit ; to pure spirit it is fluid, it is volatile, it is obedient.” It is impossible to miss, in Emerson’s treatment of nature, the influence of the idealism of Schelling, or the influence of Coleridge, who certainly received suggestion from Schelling, or the influence of Wordsworth, whose poetry is often saturated with a Schellingian spirit. But Emerson gives himself over to nature as her peculiar property in a way that Wordsworth does not. And in his theorisings as to Nature, we seem to meet full-blos-

somed Aristotelian optimism. The pantheistic tincturing of his moral teaching is seen in its tendency to fall back on nature, and to explain all history as the necessary development of nature. "Nature is no saint," he says, and again, "she is no literalist." "If we will be strong with her strength we must not harbour such disconsolate consciences." In "Self-Reliance" he says,—“No law can be sacred to me but that of my own nature ; good and bad are but names readily transferable to that or this.” Indeed ! I certainly think we should first have to carry our thought far beyond or behind our “own nature,” before we thus speak : there is in Emerson the same lack of finality—of carrying the moral Ought back to its depths in the Universe—that we find in the Kantian treatment of the moral autonomy. Still, it is to be said that it is the moral sentiment which, for him, “never forfeits its supremacy.” We cannot read him—and it is much to be thankful for—without a conscious increase of moral bracing and strength. So, too, in “Nominalist and Realist” he affirms : “All the Universe over there is but one thing—this old two-face, Creator-

creature, mind-matter, right-wrong, of which any proposition may be affirmed or denied." Yes, but Emerson himself will, *nolens volens*, identify subject and object—though he cannot at times get away from their action and reaction—in one common nature; and he will, in the most unsatisfactory way, slump the Will into the heap of Desires.

Emerson does not seem to me to have really avoided in his thought that sameness of substance, which is evaded only by our clearly keeping in view a relative or temporal homogeneity, in our act of consciousness, as something very different from an absolute and essential identity of essence. In 'Representative Men' we are informed that "our colossal theologies of Judaism, Christism, Buddhism, Mahometanism, are the necessary and structural action of the human mind." In these positions of his we have "the necessary and structural action" of a mind of pantheistic bent, with its results seen in our own nature being practically set above moral law. Of course, Emerson's idea that we should adopt the ambiguous advice to "follow nature," is a needful enough set-off

against the tendency to do all through externally imposed law and dutiful restraints, but then it leaves us with something still more defective and one-sided than that which it seeks to correct.

I certainly agree with Mr John Morley in thinking that Emerson lacked the deep vision which, we have seen, Dante possessed, and in virtue of which the foul, no less than fair, capabilities of mankind stood open to his gaze. The profitable view may, no doubt, be that which seeks to improve and amend man's nature in its meaner tendencies, but to do this, with the firm hand which is called for, requires that we face the facts of sinful and conflicting experience with a thoroughness which Emerson did not evince. Crown and centre of nature was Man to him: "not in nature"—to use words of his own—"but in man is all the beauty and the worth he sees." He reminds us of the line in the prologue of 'Faust,'—

"Ein jeder sieht was er im Herzen trägt,"—

so truly does our seeing spring from what we are. We might not fancy his hope of progress for

the race a very strong one, if we were to judge by his dictum in the lines "To Rhea,"—

"Who drinks of Cupid's nectar-cup  
Loveth downwards, and not up."

In his "Song of Nature" he speaks of race-development,—

"The building in the coral sea,  
The planting of the coal,"

and goes on thus to sing of man as nature's crown and climax,—

"And still the man-child is not born,  
The summit of the whole."

Believing, no doubt, in God, he takes his stand on the Godlike in man, in a way that recalls for one Goethe's beautiful poem, "Das Göttliche." Emerson's psalm of life, no less than Goethe's, might have had for its keynote the lines—

"Edel sei der Mensch,  
Hilfreich und gut!  
Denn das allein  
Unterscheidet ihn  
Von allen Wesen  
Die wir kennen."


That is to say, "Let man be noble, helpful, and



good, for that alone distinguishes him from all things that we know." As Emerson would say,—though, of course, the words are Arnold's—

"The seeds of Godlike power are in us still;  
Gods are we, bards, saints, heroes, if we will."

He would, I suppose, have endorsed the words of the 'Religio Medici,' that "there is surely a piece of Divinity in us,—something that was before the elements, and pays no homage to the sun." Hence the voice of God in his own soul was to him more than many voices of men without. The true life was for him just this life of the soul in its conscious union with the Infinite Life. When to "Divinity Students" he complains that "the soul is not preached," he utters what is true on two sides of the Atlantic; only, there were grave senses in which Emerson himself did not realise the deeps and heights of the soul—clean but contrite. For all that, one must welcome his insistence on the soul, as a great need of our time, "if" for us, as for one of our foremost poets, "precious be the soul of man to man." Man to him carries in his "brain the geometry of the city of God":



he "knows"—says Emerson to the "Divinity Students" still—"the sense of that grand word" *ought*, though his "analysis fails entirely to render account of it."

It is Emerson who finely sings, in his "Voluntaries,"—

"So nigh to grandeur is our dust,  
So near is God to man,  
When duty whispers low, *Thou must*,  
The youth replies, *I can*."

Concerning which it is to be said that it is true of us only ideally—in our best moods and capabilities, not of our habitual and ordinary actualities. The more doubtful it appears in one who makes Freewill a "part of Fate," and has so little care to make his teaching on Fate and Freedom hang together. Yet Emerson, it must be said, stands almost wholly for Freedom, and breathes the spirit of Kant. Man is to him master of circumstance and lord of fate, his necessitarian leanings notwithstanding,—

"For He that worketh high and wise,  
Nor pauses in his plan,  
Will take the sun out of the skies  
Ere freedom out of man."

Of the race the progress shall run on till, as  
the "Song of Nature" has it,—

"The sunburnt world a man shall breed  
Of all the zones and countless days.  
No ray is dimmed, no atom worn,  
My oldest force is good as new,  
And the fresh rose on yonder thorn  
Gives back the bending heavens in dew."

He has his own way—a more pagan, self-reliant way than Carlyle's—of saying that what a man renounces for God is paid to him again: it is thus, with Emerson, man comes to himself. What God, on the other hand, has given to man of His mind shall never be lost. So in Emerson's resonant Scripture paraphrase in "The Problem,"—

"One accent of the Holy Ghost  
The heedless world hath never lost."

After this, of course, it is rather disenchanting to recall that the only kind of Holy Spirit really retained for us by Emerson is the "Over-soul," whom no fine, imaginative discourse can quite resolve into a perfectly satisfactory one. One can be perfectly thankful, in saying this, for such belief in spiritual influx as Emerson possessed—




under Spinozan and other influences—and genuinely grateful for such strong penetrative sayings as that in “The Problem,”—

“Himself from God he could not free.”

We have seen how strong our thinker is on the duty of self-renunciation—that world-old truth. He it is who, in his poem entitled “Give all to Love,” strikingly says—“Heartily know, when half-gods go, the gods arrive,” which is, I suppose, his way of saying that what a man renounces for God is repaid to him—an hundred-fold, One dared put it, Who trod the wine-press alone. Herein he is in agreement with Carlyle, from whom he differs widely beyond a certain stage of theoretic agreement. With Emerson this doing of duty is to be done in the present, and not merely with our face to the other world. For Emerson, with a look of surprise, exclaims,—“Other world! There is no other world. God is One and omnipresent; here or nowhere is the whole fact.” Yes, but our mystical thinker might have better realised that men will want to know something more about the way in which the knowledge of God—not the necessary and self-

evident thing he supposes—comes to be ours, than his summary postulation of intuition implies. Yes, and more, too, about the reasons why Emerson should—unlike such inspirers as Spinoza and Schelling and Hegel—sit so loose to logical faculty? For anything new at least in his immediate and ecstatic intuition of the Absolute, there is too much that clearly reminds us of the absolute identity doctrine of Schelling, and that of the absolute unity of Plotinus. Such catholic and immediate cognition of Deity as Emerson, in fact, assumes is manifestly not a thing known to the consciousness of the race, in whose interest he assumes it. Less explicit, more wavering, he, in fact, becomes, just as the need of explanation grows more pressing. For all that, I honour him for having so nobly voiced the religious sentiment, as in his poem, “Good-bye, proud world, I’m going home,” which, hermit-like or somewhat puritanic in spirit as it may appear, is really the song of the religious mind in every age.

I think there is nothing more laudable about Emerson than the way in which he braces the spirits of men to live for God, duty, and the full



development of their individual powers, with a sublime indifference to opinion. "Greatness once and for ever has done with opinion." I am thoroughly at one with him in his teaching which tends to develop man's true individuality. I think there are few writers indeed who, in a conventional and weakly conforming age like our own, can be placed alongside Emerson for insistence on personal courage. He has finely caught the spirit described by Dante in the 'Inferno,'—


"Temer si dee di sole quelle cose  
Ch' hanno potenza di fare altrui male :  
Dell' altre no, che non son paurose."

Of which we may accept A. J. Butler's rendering,—“There need be fear only of those things which have power to do one harm : of the others none, for they are not fearful.”

In his treatment of History, the characteristic egoism of our thinker is very apparent. When this master of crisp and telling phrases bids us “be lord of a day,” and, practising wisdom and virtue, “put up” our “history books,” he manifestly offers advice which—as in many other instances—cannot be accepted as complete or perfect. However, history is to him only such

an approximation to actual truth that he prefers to live in the present. This we may take, I suppose, as part of his self-reliance—the virtue which, on his view, is the Aaron's rod swallowing up all other virtues—on which all character is, with him, based, and of which all heroism is made up. What a contrast he is, in this matter of self-reliance, to Carlyle, who, by means of hero-worship, would conduct us upwards to the Divine. Emerson professes no such need of heroes and great men. To him we, as individual men, are but parts of the "Over-soul." To him there is no other Deity than the universal and impersonal nature which, for him, makes up the eternal and ever-blessed One. Still, to him Deity is the "superpersonal" Heart—higher than we. To him no name can express God any more than—as we have seen—it could do so for Faust. And to him we are a façade of Deity.

I am, of course, not here to examine in detail all those perfect mosaics of his, whose countless fragments are so beautifully inlaid with deep insight and delicacy. But there are still some aspects of the stellar light that shines from this ethereal thinker on which it is needful to touch.



What a true and noble universality he strikes in the lines,—

“Teach me your mood, O patient stars!  
Who climb each night the ancient sky,  
Leaving on space no shade, no scars,  
No trace of age, no fear to die.”

Certainly before lines so voicing the heart universal, we feel that

“Life is too short to waste  
In critic peep or cynic bark.”

I need hardly call to remembrance that Emerson—as Lowell puts it—“values the solid meaning of thought above the subtler meaning of style.” Yes, indeed, Truth for its own worth and sake he has loved as few in his—or indeed in any—age have done. A living embodiment he has been to us of the truth of Schiller’s lines that finely tell—in his poem “Die Worte des Wahns”—of inward search and capability as the key of success in this quest for truth,—

“Es ist nicht draussen, da sucht es der Thor;  
Es ist in dir, du bringst es ewig hervor.”

In fact, true to man’s inward promptings Emerson is to a fault: he will seek no redemption



but in the soul: he will range the soul—needlessly—over against Church and exterior revelation. Optimist of pretty pure type our thinker is—one to whom, as to the Megareans of old, evil is good in the making. Gifted he is with an assured confidence that not only will “the carrion in the sun” convert itself “to grass and flowers,” but also that “man, though in brothels, or gaols, or on gibbets, is on his way to all that is good and true.” Concerning which it is to be said that neither easy nor common is a faith so optimistic—at least in modern Israel. So little has he, however, felt the pressure of the *Weltschmerz* or “world-woe” that such remains to him “the great Optimism self-affirmed in all bosoms.”

I am certainly no pessimist, but I neither follow nor envy Emerson in this: the day of blue-sky optimism is surely past, and it is impossible not to feel deepest sympathy with those pessimistic trends of thought and feeling which have

“palsied all our world with doubt,  
And all our work with woe.”

If I yet rest not in these as a finality, that is

only the triumph of a Christian optimism, which clearly sees how every one of them is being converted into good. Rather than occupy here Emersonian ground, I should prefer to stand with one whom "the malady of the ideal" struck in modern days in a very different way—with the sad-eyed Amiel, whom the resistless attractions of abstract thought and philosophic vision render at points so striking a parallel to the star-eyed Faust, whelmed in the passions of his lower nature. It will be very evident how the Emersonian position as to evil resembles, in its rejection of any positive agency at real enmity with God, that of Spinoza dealt with in an earlier essay—Emerson's results, however, costing him much less intellectual trouble than Spinoza's did to his exacting mind. Emerson does not seem to feel how unsatisfying it must for ever remain simply to make evil such a negative thing, and never try to probe the hidden spring, or secret source, of all this everlasting spirit of negation. The light—the greatest light possible to us, as I believe, and greater than many imagine—which a progressive life of faith, with its deep spiritual implications, can cast on the

grave problem of evil was, I think, largely hid from Emerson. Dogmatist he is no less than optimist in his own way, just as really as Calvin—a fact which may be worth remembering should he ever tempt us to believe that no doctrinal beliefs are of any consequence.

As to the great truth of Immortality, we may certainly allow that the highest thinkers are with him in resting this truth so largely on our own broad and high intuitions, as not to be careful overmuch in treasuring drawn-up lists or catalogues of dry logical reasons for the belief. But in this case the most that can be claimed for Emerson—to whom, it is but just to say, immortal hope grew with the years—is that he *just* escaped the cheerless pantheistic issue. "The slippery Proteus is not so easily caught." His reserve is tremendous, his hold neither firm nor convincing. His silence, it should be said, is that of reverence, not cynicism. "Men ask," he says, "concerning the immortality of the soul. They even dream that Jesus left replies to precisely these interrogatories." Now, it is true, as one has said, that "in interpreting the soul and in revealing God, Jesus aimed at more

than simply communicating new and ennobling knowledge to the world." But, for all that, I dare affirm that Jesus *has* left replies to this great inquiry, and I dare doubt whether Emerson at all fully appreciated the spiritual force of His affirmations or replies, which are none the less telling or forcible even when not of a direct kind. I cordially allow, with Emerson, that the full proofs for immortality never can be presented, for language is inadequate to such high ends. But I claim a place, and a large place, for reason, after the working of all interior revelation. And the reason for which I claim this is not the mere impersonal sort of reason for which Emerson claims perpetuity—and which, I think, reminds one strongly of Spinoza's claim for the eternity of ideas—but a spiritual reason which is living and real. "The stoic of a young America" he is styled by Amiel, and this is what we find him—in virtue of his stoical ἀταραξία and apathy—to be, just when we least want it. Ay, to him all loves, all friendships of "progressive" souls, are but momentary, which is to grant us almost more than we ask.

In his essay on "Experience" he says,—“I

grieve"—and well indeed at such a time he might—"that grief can teach me nothing, nor carry me one step into real nature." Against which must in justice be placed his thrilling threnody—lofty as Milton's "Lycidas," inspiring as Shelley's "Adonais," modern as Arnold's "Thyrsis," and tender as Cowper's piece on his mother's picture—in which occur the lines,—

"What is excellent,  
As God lives, is permanent ;  
Hearts are dust, hearts' loves remain ;  
Heart's love will meet thee again."

Earlier in this piece our idealistic poet has said, in the sorrow of a philosophy not fully satisfying,—

"The eager fate which carried thee  
Took the largest part of me ;  
For this losing is true dying ;  
This is lordly man's down-lying,  
This his slow but sure reclining,  
Star by star his world resigning."

And, almost immediately, his sorrow for the loss of his child breaks forth again,—

"O truth's and nature's costly lie !  
O trusted broken prophecy !  
O rich fortune sourly crossed !  
Born for the future, to the future lost !"

The tender humanness of the man who has passed through sorrow's "valley" marks also his poem "Dirge,"—

"Not unless God made sharp thine ear  
With sorrow such as mine,  
Out of that delicate lay couldst thou  
Its heavy tale divine."

Nor are the like tender human qualities wanting to such pieces as his "In Memoriam," and the lines to "Ellen at the South" and "To J. W." In his poem "Terminus" he gives us nothing either very definite or high, though, on the other hand, he elsewhere puts the belief in immortality forward as the "test of a man's sanity," and argues up to man's noble destiny by the quaint query, — "Will you build magnificently for mice?" The same Emerson it is, however, who tells us that "everything connected with our personality fails," and that "Nature never spares the individual." So we leave his mystical eschatology feeling that the working of the spiritual reason has, after all intuition's might, been too much crushed out.

This essay I close by recalling with how much reason we may, after every deduction, ask our-

selves, in words which Emerson himself wrote concerning another,—“Are we not the better, are not all men fortified, by the remembrance of the bravery, the purity, the temperance, the toil, the independence, and the angelic devotion of this man, who, in a revolutionary age, taking counsel only of himself, endeavoured, in his writings and his life, to carry out the life of man to new heights of spiritual grace and dignity, without any abatement of its strength?”



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